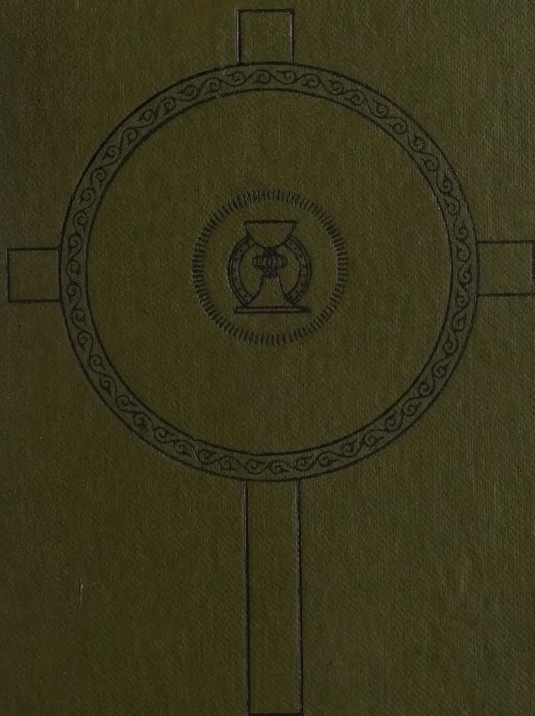


⦿ CHURCH ⦿  
SYMBOLISM



M. C. NIEUWBARN, O. P.  
*TRANSLATED BY*  
JOHN WATERREUS







CHURCH SYMBOLISM



# CHURCH SYMBOLISM

A TREATISE ON THE GENERAL  
SYMBOLISM AND ICONOGRAPHY  
OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC  
:: :: CHURCH EDIFICE :: ::

BY THE VERY REV.

FATHER M. C. NIEUWBARN, O.P.

*(With the approbation of the Bishop of Bois-le-Duc)*

TRANSLATED FROM THE DUTCH  
WITH THE AUTHOR'S PERMISSION

By THE REV. JOHN WATERREUS

*(Of the Mill-Hill Congregation, late R.C.C. of Peshawur)*

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## PREFACE

THE following treatise owes its origin to a strong desire for remedying a great defect. As a general rule even devout and earnest Catholics are but very poorly acquainted with the almost inexhaustible treasures of piety and learning embodied in their churches. The great majority know absolutely nothing of the symbolic meanings attached to the House of God, and this sacred symbolism so thoroughly understood by our fathers has become a foreign language, only known to a select few that have turned their minds in that direction. 'Images are books replete with doctrine,' is a saying of pre-reformation days ; the doctrine is still there, and the text has been multiplied to an incredible extent, but the intelligent readers have become more scarce than ever.

It is sad to contemplate what loss of spiritual food this lack of symbolic knowledge has

inflicted on thousands of souls. Both symbolism and iconography have become to the average Catholic nothing more than a certain style of architecture and furnishing without any ulterior meaning. Pictures are painted and statues are carved in formidable quantities for the decoration of the House of God, and people are already highly satisfied if colour and form agree with their taste.

It would be of little use to raise a complaint about our shortcomings in this respect, if unaccompanied by a vigorous effort to retrieve the past. The signs of the times indicate the present as a propitious moment. We can discover a strong tendency towards mysticism, symbolism and ritual, both in art and literature. And although this movement is not invariably rooted in a healthy soil, it tells us most emphatically, that now we must wake up from our lethargy and draw once more the attention of the faithful to the profusion of riches heaped up in our own liturgical arts and sciences, all bearing the hall-mark of the sterling truth and beauty of God's Holy Church.

It is beyond all doubt that such awakening will largely contribute to the development and

the deepening of religious feeling, thought and action. All signs point to the hope-inspiring fact that the Catholics of the twentieth century are as eager to profit by the knowledge of Church-symbolism as their fathers were in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, that saw the rise of their glorious cathedrals. The cathedrals may be lost to us, but the essential principles of this doctrine of symbolism may be found in the humblest Catholic chapel, and the teachings of iconography may be applied in any oratory.

It is the purpose of this manual to serve as a guide to all who may feel interested in this truly Catholic science, and as a clue by means of which they may trace the religious thoughts and doctrines imbedded in the Churches and in all they contain. For this reason all superfluities have been avoided and very sparing use has been made of scientific terms. Withal the author has tried to give a complete view of the whole subject, and has contrived to collect within these pages the most important data of symbolism, as well with regard to minor as to the more weighty matters. And here we feel bound to quote his own words: 'This

treatise contains only the general doctrine about the subjects indicated, and is confessedly insufficient to make people thoroughly acquainted with all the details of their own parish churches. Hence it is my fervent desire to see this manual used as an introduction or a foundation for large numbers of various "guides to local churches." There is no reason why such "guides" should not be forthcoming. Every little town, every important establishment has them; why then should we not make use of the same means for the instruction of our people and for the promotion of more fervent piety?'

The author has practised what he preaches, and has provided the Catholics of the town where he resides, Nimeguen, Holland, with a most instructive symbolic and iconographic guide to their local churches.

No doubt in England and in all English-speaking countries able heads and ready hearts abound to undertake this work of love and devotion. Nothing can be better calculated to satisfy a healthy craving for mystic and symbolic knowledge, and to promote at the same time the intellectual appreciation of the

beauty of the House of God and to give a fresh impulse to the devotion towards Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is the beginning and the end of all sacred symbolism.

That many such 'Guides to our Churches' may be built on the foundations here laid down, is the fervent wish of

THE TRANSLATOR.



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# CHURCH SYMBOLISM

## I

### INTRODUCTION

‘The mediæval artists have made the Christian temple, as it were, a new creation, in which, as in an epic poem of mortar and stone, they have incorporated every creature of the visible and of the invisible world.’—VIOLETTE-LE-DUC.

OUR Catholic Churches possess a distinct character of their own. We recognize them at once amongst any number of other buildings, for however much they may vary in size, form, style, outward aspect or anything else, they all bear the unmistakable stamp of a Catholic Church. In all of them, notwithstanding their various differences, we find the general and identical features of ‘the House of God.’ As such they all perfectly resemble each other, as will be shown from our present inquiry.

We shall find that the description of a Catholic Church in general, is at the same time the general description of any particular Catholic Church ; for whether there be question

of a stately temple of majestic dimensions or of a poor village church, of a glorious mediæval cathedral or a hastily erected chapel-of-ease, it is all the same; all are equally permeated with this elevated principle: 'A Catholic Church is a House of prayer, where the God of Love dwells in the midst of the children of man.'

'The Church is full of God' says an old poet, rehearsing in his own words a truth well-known to every Catholic and long ages ago proclaimed in Holy Writ: 'The temple is the sanctuary of the Lord.' Just as we children of the 20th century bend down in adoration before the Divine Saviour, reposing in the Holy Tabernacle; just as we know and feel that the Majesty of the Lord fills the space of our temples, so our fathers in religion did and knew and felt, for their churches too, were the dwelling-place of the living God who had taken up His abode among His people. The whole of Western Europe bears witness to this fact and in England we find the proofs strewn about most profusely over the face of our country, in the countless churches built by our pious forefathers, now too frequently shorn of their



*Sapientia ædificavit sibi domum.*

FIG. 1.—*Sapientia ædificavit sibi domum.*  
'Wisdom built unto itself a house:' the Church filled with the Spirit of God.

meaning for those who worship there in a fashion of their own, unthought of by the ancient master-builders.

1. It is but a natural consequence of their vivid faith, that those material buildings should have possessed in their minds a higher meaning than of a mere meeting-place, a grand monument or something of that kind. Very early already it obtained a distinct spiritual meaning, that found its origin in the purpose for which it was destined, viz: to serve as an abode for the very God of Heaven. I say very early, because it is a remarkable fact, that when in the 12th and 13th centuries various important writings appeared, setting forth with great clearness and decision the thoughts and ideas expressed by a church-edifice and everything connected with it, these treatises were then already little more than a collection of current notions, centuries before accepted by the people at large and steadfastly adhered to, although the Church had not authoritatively made any definite pronouncement on the subject.

2. For it must not be lost sight of, that the explanations set forth in the following pages, although abounding in real Christian sentiment, form no part of the dogmatic teaching of our holy religion. Nevertheless they are of very high value, because they constitute the pious and venerable figurative language deeply rooted

in the highly poetical religious life of our most ancient and our mediaeval co-religionists.

Some of them even, regarding particular points of minor importance, are rather arbitrary, and have on that account not been admitted in these pages, as we want to deal exclusively with such as are firmly rooted in the steady soil of symbolic science. But the leading principles underlying all those explanations are generally so logically laid down, and in such direct connection with our Catholic doctrine, that even the Church has frequently adopted them in her official liturgy.

3. Moreover, those symbolic meanings have exercised and do still at the present day exercise a very powerful influence on all church architecture. This then is our statement :

All divisions and sub-divisions of the sacred building, all ornamentations great and small, all lines and colours, all flowers and images, obtained their sacred meaning, because anything common or profane, when once adapted to the service of the Lord, was thereby converted into something of a more elevated meaning and purpose. In a word, all material forms and substances were endowed with a higher and spiritual life, flowing forth from the fact of their being destined for 'the House of God.' And so it came to pass, that a Saint Francis in holy jealousy could envy the



very stones of the sanctuary walls, because they surrounded day and night their Creator in the holy Tabernacle ; and that Saint Ignatius could throw himself down on the sanctuary floor and kiss the steps leading up to the altar, the glorious resting-place of his Lord and God. In other words, the high purpose these common bricks and stones did serve, sanctified them and lifted them high above the condition of their purely material existence.

And here we touch the domain of symbolism.

### What is Symbolism ?

1. By symbolism we here understand the science of symbols, that is the knowledge of the meaning of certain signs, emblems, figures, representations, memorials, allusions, by which another thing is known or inferred, belonging to a higher and nobler sphere.

For instance, when we consider the spotless whiteness of a lily we are as it were led on to think of the higher and more sublime purity of an innocent soul, and construe the expression 'a lily-white soul'; in other words the lily becomes to us the symbol of purity of soul.

Church symbolism in its widest sense would comprise everything symbolic of a religious or ecclesiastical nature, but we use it here in the more restricted sense, confining itself to the

church-edifice and its various component parts. To this may be added the knowledge of the established meanings attached to certain objects and forms employed in painting and sculpture, or of church-iconography. Both form part of ecclesiology, or of art in service of the Church.

2. It is not unlikely that some may incline to the opinion, that only saints, or learned men, or more artistically-minded thinkers, would attach such-like poetic and sacred meanings to the House of God. But in that case they would be mistaken. For although by far the greater part of the faithful of the middle ages—living long before the invention of printing—were not able to decipher the written texts of the precious manuscripts of their times, still they were so thoroughly well acquainted with the truths of religion, that they understood the art of reading the pious thoughts of their spiritual instructors, expressed in the universally known meanings of the ground plan, the construction and the ornamentation of their churches. Pictures and statues were the devotion books of those unable to read, although proficiency in this accomplishment kept pace with the degree of intellectual development of various persons.

3. To give an example. When the faithful entered the church, they saw in the porch—later on in the painted glass of the great west-

window—a representation of the Last Judgment, showing on the Saviour's right hand the five wise and on his left-hand the five foolish Virgins, and they understood from their very position, that the former were called to glory and that the latter were rejected. The better educated knew moreover, that the five wise Virgins indicated the five forms of internal perfection and the five foolish Virgins the sinful inclinations of the five senses. So too, when they perceived a golden nimbus over the head of a statue or picture, they knew that the person represented was one of the saints of Heaven, and that a similar nimbus adorned with a cross indicated the Divine Saviour.

4. Knowledge of this kind made not only the people perfectly familiar with their own church and all the objects of art it contained, but was at the same time of important service to the artists of those days. For just as in the present day, not every builder, sculptor or painter of the time fully deserved the name of artist, and but few among them could impress the heart of the faithful simply and solely by force of superior talent. But it was not so very difficult to touch their intellect, because both artists and faithful were children of the same Catholic generation, attaching the same ideas to the same lines and forms. These things they had learned from the sermons delivered in the

churches, from the simple talk in the family home, and above all from that natural disposition common to the Christians of that day. In a word, they understood each other, because in their symbols they everywhere spoke the same language.

5. For them the entire church-edifice was quickened by a rich spiritual life. Its situation towards the east, where the sun rises in the morning, the form and the painting of the vaulted roof, which reminded them of Heaven, the very floor where they trod the emblems of vice under foot, everything had become perfectly familiar to them from the earliest days of their youth. These things were the signs and tokens and emblems which held before their eyes the oft repeated religious doctrine or admonished them in silent language to practise virtue and eschew all evil.

6. This thoroughly worked out symbolic system was applied to all details and turned into a popular catechism, not in words but in forms and images. It enabled the people to read not only in the churches themselves, but in sacred vestments and altar vessels, in flowers, plants and animals, in the beautiful figures of angels and in the monstrous representations of devils, in all ornamentation great and small, a plain and exact statement of the doctrines of faith. There they found most distinctly verified

the word of Holy Writ : that the eternal power and Divinity of the Lord can be known from all created things.

### The Diffusion of Symbolic Knowledge.

1. It may reasonably be asked, by what means this knowledge became so generally diffused. We have stated already that it was not spread by being directly taught or prescribed by the Church, but a large variety of elements too numerous to be all mentioned in this short treatise, combined to establish this result. We can only point out a few of the most important : the treatises of writers on divinity, the sacred hymns of religious poets, the utterances of eloquent popular preachers, countless spiritual writings, picture-catechisms, bibles of the poor and such-like, but above all the solemn liturgy of the Church. The latter especially is in our opinion the main source of those edifying symbolic explanations. Even a cursory perusal of the ancient and most beautiful formula used at the consecration of a church is sufficient to prove this incontestably. Or again, take the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, which was already in common use in the 13th century, and we cannot fail to see, that it contains the purest figurative language of the Old Testament, in which the symbolic texts of the Canticle and

of the Psalms are applied to the Holy Virgin-Mother of God.

2. Moreover, in trying to form a correct idea of the rapid and general diffusion of this doctrine of symbols, we must bear in mind the peculiar receptiveness of the devout Roman Catholic people and of its warm-hearted artists for such a vivifying quickening of dead material, which they as it were inhaled with the very air they breathed.

3. Add to this, that the search for symbols is as old as man himself. And this is perfectly natural, because this longing keeps pace with the growing poetic feelings of the rational soul, instinctively grasping the truth of this saying of Origen: 'He who wisely ordained everything, laid down in every visible creature a lesson and a moral, to enable the soul of man to elevate itself to the knowledge of spiritual things.'

4. And so, when at last in the 11th and 12th centuries the personal and frequently very diverse symbols had obtained a more definite and constant form, it became possible for the authors of the 13th century, Honorius of Autun and Sicardus, to turn the stream of symbolic explanations into a well-defined course; and their successors, Durandus and his school, had only to arrange in logical order everything that had been settled in principle, and that was

already generally known among the people of their time.

### The Purpose of Symbolism.

1. We now ask the question: to what purpose was this general system of symbols intended to serve? Taken in general this symbolism possessed the value of an artistic commemoration of the divine work of redemption and of the doctrine of Revelation. One of the best-known ecclesiologists formulates this as follows: 'The true significance of a Christian church starts with Jesus Christ and returns to Him, with Him it begins, and with Him it ends.'

2. The leading idea of this symbolic science may therefore be defined in this way: The material church built by the hands of man is a symbol of the spiritual Church founded by the Redeemer.

The complete development of this symbolism has been very gradual. The Old Testament, Saint Paul tells us, was a prototype, a prophecy in types and figures, in persons and things, and in all its contents of the fulfilment that was to come in the New. Or as Saint Augustine has it: The Patriarchs and Prophets, their words and deeds, their method of life and their very children were an uninterrupted pointing forward to Christ and His Church;

the Jewish nation in its government and history was one long prophecy of the Saviour and His holy doctrine. This point deserves our fullest attention, because it is the main principle underlying the whole of symbolism.

3. Our Divine Lord too taught his disciples and the people by allegory and parable. Prophesying His death and resurrection He called Himself 'a temple' in a spiritual sense. And here we have the first church-symbol spoken by the Divine Founder and Instructor of the Church. Now the people of the middle-ages intended the very same things, but they worked from the opposite direction. They conferred a spiritual life on their material temples and then found in their churches, and in everything they contained, a continual commemoration of the God of Love, who dwelt there as a father in the midst of his children.

4. All this they laid down and expressed more emphatically than ever before in the Gothic style of architecture, so rich in high and noble ideas, that it has never been surpassed by any other. Their temples became to them the material representation of the 'heavenly Jerusalem,' erected 'from living stones,' because this heavenly city, as described in the Apocalypse, has its four walls, each with three gates, set in the direction of the four winds of heaven,



to allow all to enter in the name of the Blessed Trinity ; whilst its twelve gates are founded on twelve precious stones, the twelve Apostles on whom the Church is built.

Gothic art repeats in continual change and combination the square, symbolic expression of earthly things, and the triangle, expressive of the Blessed Trinity, the fundamental doctrine of our religion. We find them back in flowers and leaves,\* in interwoven circles and architectural divisions of the house of prayer, in windows, porches and towers ; or, worked into a hexagon, they form the figure of the morning star, which even as the rose, is a symbol of the Bl. Virgin Mary. The circle is the well-known symbol of the infinity of God, to whom we are silently directed by the pointed arch, symbol of the resurrection.

In whatever direction we turn our eyes, either to the altar with its ornamentation of pinnacles and foliated crosses, to the windows with their intricate tracery, to the massive porch and gables or upwards to the high tower, everywhere we see the cross announcing the fact, that the Catholic temple is dedicated to the service of the Divine Crucified.

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\* Three-leaved clover is a symbol of the Bl. Trinity : the four-leaved is a symbol of the death on the Cross, the world, the four Evangelists, the Cardinal virtues. More will be given in 'symbolic numbers.'



FIG. 2. A  
pinnacle with  
flowery cross.

5. We have given here only a few obvious instances of this enormously rich symbolism of the house of God, but we now intend to explain in regular order the sacred meanings of its construction and ornamentation. We are obliged, however, to state beforehand that our explanation must be very succinct indeed, on account of the general scope of this little book; because this science of symbolism has in the course of ages acquired truly large proportions. And this need not astonish us, if we only consider how for many centuries, throughout the whole of Europe, the most important buildings as well as the profoundest writings have proclaimed the glory of God in a church-symbolism applied to almost every object. We must therefore content ourselves with giving a short but systematic and complete digest of these various matters and so to bring the whole subject within the reach of our readers.

### The Basilica.

The symbolism that we are now going to consider in particular is old, very old. Its life began with the first public oratories of the faithful, the basilicas, or rather still further

back, in the catacombs, the subterranean burial places of the first Christians. The system fully developed in the middle ages, can be distinctly traced in outline in the original church plans. On this account it will be very useful, for a better understanding of all we have to state in this matter, if we first examine the peculiar arrangement of a Christian church in those bygone ages, in the most perfect form it could possibly have possessed.

I. Although it is highly prob-

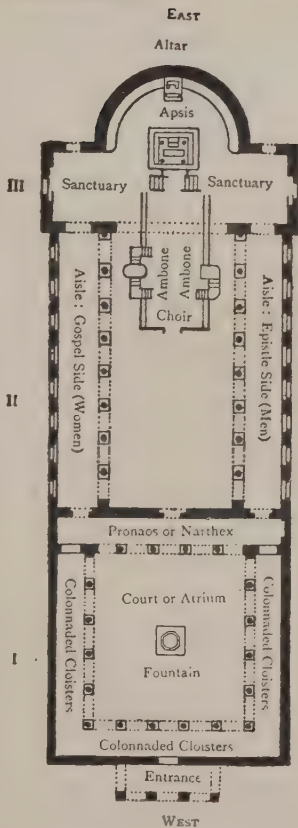


FIG. 3. An idealistic ground plan of a Basilica.

This plan is not a historical one, but is composed of the various qualities indicated by several well-known Basilicas.

able that the ground plan of the church-basilica was originally derived from the palace-basilica, it is at the same time almost certain, that very soon two distinct types put in an appearance, the oblong (Latin) form in the West, and the square central (Byzantine) in the East. Both consisted of these three divisions : atrium, nave, and apse.

2. A porch supported on pillars gave admission into an open court or atrium, surrounded by a colonnaded cloister. In the centre of the court stood a cistern or fountain for purposes of drinking and ablution. (Our modern holy-water basin at the entrance of a church still reminds us of this.) In close proximity to the atrium, often to the west, was the baptistery, frequently octagonal.

3. The Church was entered by a long narrow porch (narthex) beyond which the penitents, or those under ecclesiastical censure, and the catechumens, were forbidden to pass. This narthex was sometimes internal, at other times an external portico. Three or four lofty doorways, according to the number of the aisles, set in marble cases, gave admission to the church. The doors were of a rich wood, elaborately carved with scriptural subjects, or of bronze similarly adorned and often gilt. Magnificent curtains, as a rule embroidered with sacred figures or scenes, closed the entrance, keeping out the heat of summer and the cold of winter.

4. The interior consisted of a long and wide nave often eighty feet across, terminating in a circular apse, with one or sometimes two aisles on each side, separated by colonnades of marble pillars, supporting horizontal entablatures or arches. Above the pillars the clerestory wall rose to a great height, pierced in its upper part by a range of plain round-headed windows. The space between the windows and the colonnade was usually decorated with series of mosaic pictures in panels. The upper galleries of the basilicas were not as a rule adopted in the West; they are much more frequent in the East, where they were destined for the special use of the women. The colonnades sometimes extended quite to the end of the church, sometimes they ceased some little distance from the end, thus forming a transverse aisle or transept, which was the origin of the highly significant cruciform plan, adopted later on in the Roman style of church architecture. In this transept, on the north side, were places for the more distinguished women, on the south side for the men. This separation of the sexes was continued for many centuries and is still in vogue in a great many places. In churches with only one nave, the men were placed in front, the women behind.

5. Where this transept occurred, it was divided from the nave by a wide arch, the

western face and soffit of which were richly decorated with mosaics. Over the crown of the arch we often find a bust of Christ, or the Holy Lamb stretched upon the altar, and on either side the evangelistic symbols, the seven candlesticks, and the twenty-four elders. Another arch spanned the semicircular apse, in which the church always terminated. This was designated 'the arch of triumph' from the mosaics that decorated it, representing the triumph of the Church and of the Divine Saviour. The conch or semi-dome that covered the apse, was always covered with

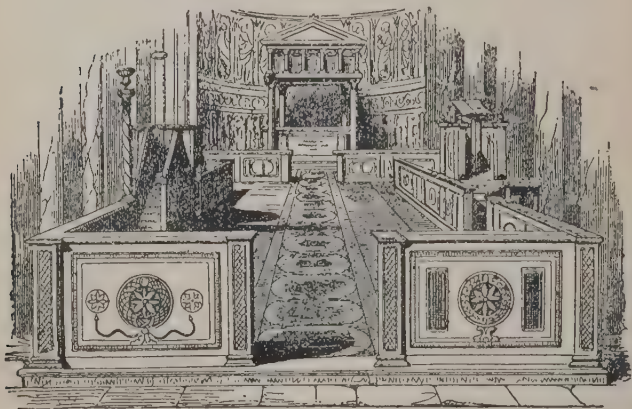


FIG. 4. Apse of a Basilica. Choir-seats; chancel, with the two ambones. Altar with ciborium; near the right or Gospel-ambon the paschal candle.

mosaic paintings on a gold ground, usually representations of our Lord seated or standing, with Saint Peter and Saint Paul and other Apostles and Saints on either hand. The beams of the roof were generally concealed by a flat ceiling, richly carved and gilt.

6. The altar stood in the centre of the chord of the apse on a raised platform reached by flights of steps, and was rendered conspicuous by a lofty canopy supported on marble pillars, from which depended curtains of the richest material. From this canopy a vessel hung suspended, frequently in the shape of a dove (symbol of the Holy Ghost), in which the Blessed Sacrament was reserved. Underneath the altar was the *confessio*, a subterranean chapel, containing the body of the patron saint and relics of other holy persons. This was approached by descending flights of steps from the nave or the aisles. The *confessio*, in some cases, reproduced the original place of interment of the patron saint, either in a catacomb chapel or in an ordinary grave, and thus formed the sacred nucleus, around which the church arose. The bishop or officiating priest advanced from his seat, in the centre of the semicircle of the apse, to the eastern side of the altar and celebrated the Holy Eucharist with his face towards the congregation below.

7. At the foot of the altar steps a raised

platform, occupying the upper portion of the nave, formed a choir for the singers, readers and the other inferior clergy. This oblong space was separated from the aisles and from the western portion of the nave by low marble walls or railings. From these walls projected ambones or pulpits with desks also of marble and ascended by steps. The one destined for the reader of the Gospel was usually octagonal with a double flight of steps, one eastward and one westward. That for the reader of the epistle was square or oblong. Out of this basilica the Roman and Gothic styles were developed, in both of which we shall find the above-mentioned parts and divisions under other names, but very little changed



## II

### THE CHURCH EDIFICE.

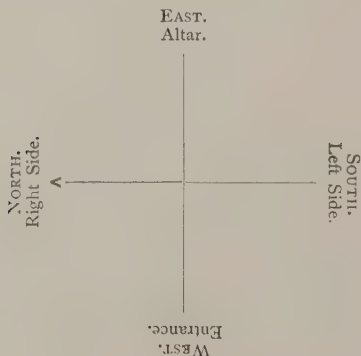
#### A.—Main Division.

1. THE first principle to be observed in the erection of a Catholic church is that of its orientation, that is to say, the main axis of the building must run from duly east to west, so that the high-altar shall be placed in the east, where the sun rises, and the entrance shall be in the west. This is the so-called Holy line prescribed in church architecture. When, on account of the peculiar situation of the ground on which a church is to be erected, such orientation is not actually possible, as at present frequently happens in our crowded cities, even then it is theoretically supposed to have been observed, and no change is made in the usual arrangements and terminology.

2. This principle of orientation rests on the liturgical ground, that public worship always takes the oriental position as its starting point. When the liturgy, for instance, directs the priest to read the Gospel on the north side,

where the country of the heathens is supposed to be situated, it gives us thereby to understand that the High-altar must be erected in the east.

3. For a better understanding of this point, an explanation of this 'north' will throw more light on the subject. In ecclesiology the right or gospel-side is always called the north, and the left or epistle-side is called the south. But right and left are here not considered from the spectators', but from the celebrants' point of view when facing the congregation. In ordinary parlance we would say, that the Gospel-side was on the left, and the Epistle-side on the right, but in church-symbolism it is just the reverse. The position of a church must always be considered in this way :



4. If according to the Scriptures the sunny south was the favoured direction from which the Lord was to approach, then the north was not so highly privileged, but as ecclesiastical authors express it, the direction of inferior dignity. Or, as it is explained by Saint Gregory: 'the dark and icy north is the emblem of the heathen world, turned to ice under the cold blast of idolatry.' This is the reason why during Holy Mass, at the gospel, the missal is transferred to the north side, symbolizing in this manner the preaching of the gospel to the heathen.

5. Moreover, this northern or right side was set apart for the use of the women, whilst the opposite or south side was allotted to the men. Whenever this principle was strictly adhered to, it was even observed with regard to the statues of male and female saints.

6. As a rule the baptismal font was placed on this side, where the heathen (unbaptised) child 'born from woman' was first introduced into the fold of Christ.

7. This idea about north and south had one very remarkable consequence. If, so reasoned symbolism, sin entered the world by the temptation of woman (Eve), so redemption too was wrought to the world by the co-operation of woman (the Blessed Virgin Mary). And on this account the north or Gospel side was

appropriated for the Lady-Altar, whilst the left or Epistle side was left to the altar of the patron saint, and in later days more frequently for that of Saint Joseph. All these arrangements may be observed in nearly all our churches.

8. To return to the orientation. The high-altar is placed in the east. The east, the direction of the rising sun, is the emblem of the light of the Gospel and still more appropriately of the 'Sun of Grace' rising every morning in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The east, moreover, saw the creation of man; there the Saviour lived and taught and suffered, and offered the great sacrifice of expiation; there Christ 'the brightness of eternal light' became for everyone of us 'the Sun of justice'



FIG. 5. Symbolic representation of the East (Oriens).

on earth, and 'the light of our expectation unto life eternal.' Tradition too adds here the weight of its authority, for it tells us, that the Saviour, when dying on Mount Calvary, had His face averted from Jerusalem (the east, Jewry) and turned in the opposite direction, (the west) towards the future converts from heathenism. And keeping this in mind the Church offers the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass—the renewal of the

Sacrifice of Calvary—in the east, and the faithful, placed in the west, see in the altar of the Church the holy mountain of suffering of the New Testament.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Cross is likewise commemorated in

### The Ground Plan of the Church.

1. Mediæval writings make mention of two forms: the central cruciform, symbolizing the four points of the compass and expressing thereby the catholicity of the church; and the cross-church, the oblong cruciform, which is of far more frequent occurrence, and on that account will be the object of our special enquiry.

It derives its name from the fact, that between the nave and the choir, a transverse portion, the transept, is added, extending beyond the sides of the area enclosing those divisions, thus forming the short arms of the cross (the transverse beam), upon which plan the church is laid out. This coalescing of two oblong parts of the edifice into one well-defined unit was held to represent the union of the Old and the New Testaments into the one Divine Revelation.

2. Although we are convinced, that purely

architectural reasons alone must principally account for this almost universally adopted ground plan, we yet cannot doubt that from the very earliest times this cruciform church was considered as the Body of Our Lord stretched out on the Cross. The Head, the sanctuary or priests' choir, was in the east, because there both light and salvation originated. The left hand, nailed to the transverse beam, was the south transept, pointing in the direction of the country of the Jews; the right hand was the north transept, stretched towards the north, the abode of the heathen nations. The feet pointed towards the west, the direction in which the Saviour of mankind sent His looks of love and blessing over the coming multitude of His faithful adorers.

3. The edifice was usually erected on rising ground and ascended by a flight of steps. This is especially the case with the old cathedrals, that were always built on some conspicuous site to express the idea of the rock (Peter) on which Christ has built His Church. The ritual of Church-dedication makes special mention thereof: 'The House of the Lord is built on the summit of the mountains'; and again: 'Its foundations are on the Holy Mountain.' We shall find this same idea repeated in the construction of the altar.

We now proceed to examine a church in its principal parts, and begin with

### The Tower or Towers.

1. Placed as faithful sentries near the main entrance on the west-side, they may be said to represent the Apostles (especially Saints Matthew and John) pointing to heaven with outstretched arms of stone, and expressing in this manner the words of Saint Paul : ' Look for the things that are above.'

2. As a body of great bulk and weight the tower bears the character of unassailable, firmly rooted power, its height being symbolic of 'high authority.' It is likewise a symbol of the Lord's Omnipotence, as is written in the Book of Proverbs : 'Strongest tower, is the name of God.' It is, moreover, representative of the idea of 'mounting heavenward,' in connection with which the battlements are considered as steps or grades of perfection.



FIG. 6.—Gothic tower with two battlements.

3. In course of time the lofty tower came to be considered as an emblem of 'Holy Church,' and still more as an emblem of the Blessed Virgin Mary; for she is the personification of the highest human perfection, daily honoured by us in the Litany of Loreto under the glorious titles: 'Tower of David,' and 'Tower of Ivory.'

4. Here we have two tower-symbolisms. 'Tower of David' was applied to the mighty strength of her all-powerful intercession, and 'Tower of Ivory' to the immaculate purity of the Mother of God, who elsewhere in Holy Writ is called: 'bright, precious, strong as ivory.'



FIG. 7.—The 'tower of David.' Symbol of the Bl. V. Mary.

5. Symbolism discovered two other emblems in the towers, viz: that of the two Testaments, and that of the two chief commandments, of love towards God and towards our neighbour, which in their turn were connected with the spiritual and temporal order of things.

6. Lastly, a younger generation of symbolists explained the towers as emblems of prayer, holding both arms uplifted in supplication day and night to obtain God's blessing over church and town.

All this, undoubtedly, suffices to show us the richness of the tower-symbolism. And yet



we have made no mention of the external covering (the slates), of cross and apple and weathercock and of the bells with all their belongings. Our limited space does not permit us to go beyond a mere mentioning of these things, about which extensive and profound articles might be written. They all abound in symbolical meanings, especially the church bells accompanying with their metal voices the principal incidents of the joys and woes of life.

We shall now enter a church and consider its

### Interior Arrangement.

1. We have seen already that the ancient Basilica was divided, after the manner of Holy Church itself, in three parts; the Church militant, the Church suffering, and the Church triumphant. In accordance with this principle the masters of the middle ages divided their temples in atrium, nave and sanctuary, or as they expressed it symbolically, in paradise, earth and heaven, indicating in this way the places allotted to the non-perfect Christians, (public penitents and catechumens), the faithful and the clergy.

2. The atrium was apportioned to the public penitents. Whether high or low in the social scale, those guilty of public crime had their

head strewn with ashes, their body clad in penitential garb and were obliged to await

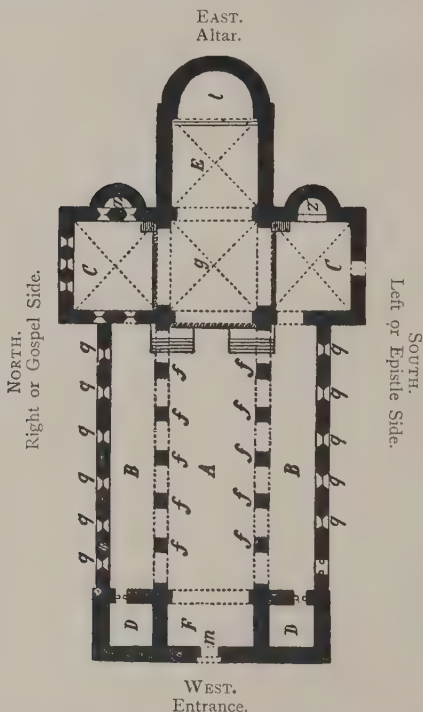


FIG. 8.—Ground plan of a Roman Basilica.

A, the Nave, B, the Aisles ; C g C, the Transept ; C, Arm of the Cross ; g, Centre of Transept ; E, Priest's Choir ; l, Apsis. Conch ; Under the Altar is the Crypt ; D, Towers, F, Entrance-Porch ; f, Pillars ; g, Windows, L, Little-altar niches.

patiently the moment that they would be allowed to join again their brethren in sharing all the privileges of the faithful.

Here too, in primitive times, the 'agape,' or charitable meal was partaken of, and in later years, the alms, destined for the poor and needy, were distributed. Besides, being considered as in a state of imperfection, this part of the church was very often selected as the spot destined for the Baptistry and the mortuary chapel. Hence it became, almost as a matter of course, representative of the Church suffering in purgatory.

This old and extensive atrium was, however, in a great many places reduced, first to a large, and afterwards to a rather small entrance hall or porch. Still it is worthy of observation, that in this entrance hall the whole of theology was, so to say, visibly expressed, even in such a degree, that this very locality was treated as a centre of the purest mediæval symbolism and iconography. An enormous mass of literature dealing with this subject is still extant. The great cost of suitable building-plots, especially in towns, is one of the principal reasons why the atrium with its high symbolic meaning has gradually disappeared. Consequently, and much more in keeping with the present conditions of church-architecture, we divide our churches, after the example of St.

Gregory of Nizza, in two parts only ; viz : sanctuary and nave, with the symbolic meanings of the spiritual and the temporal, the celestial and the terrestrial order, or the parts destined for the clergy and for the laity.

This division is all the more suitable to our present purpose, as we want to give an explanatory description of our modern churches, in which as a rule, the old atrium is entirely wanting. In accordance with the foregoing considerations the church edifice represents in its two divisions, 'the city of God,' the communion of all the faithful, uniting both Jew and heathen in the one Christianity, like the two parallel church walls are united by one and the same roof. Yet in the one body the distinction between clergy and laity remains, and is symbolized by the division into nave (destined for the laity) and choir (destined for the clergy).

The illustration accompanying our description will make this perfectly clear.

### The Nave.

3. The symbolic meanings of the nave are :  
(a.) 'The church militant,' the union of all the faithful on earth. Here the Christian learns how to defend himself against the temptations

that assail him ; here he finds protection against the violence of their attacks, as Noah and his household found safety in the ark, when everything outside was either drowned or destroyed.



FIG. 9.—The Bark of St. Peter : Symbol of the Church.



FIG. 10.—The Ark of Noah : Symbol of the Church.

(*b.*) 'The bark of Peter,' in which the Apostles knew themselves safe in the presence and at the word of Christ, even in the midst of the stormy waves of the lake of Genesareth. And this 'bark of Peter,' became in its turn symbolic of the whole Church of God, landing its freight of souls unscathed on the shores of eternity, as it is expressed in the consecration service itself.

### The Choir or Sanctuary

The more important of our two church divisions, symbolizes according to Saints Ambrose, Augustine, Thomas, and a great many other Fathers and Doctors, 'Triumphant Heaven,' where Christ is seated on His throne (the Holy Tabernacle) and where He is surrounded and adored by His heavenly court, here represented by the clergy.

(a.) In churches of more considerable dimensions the semicircular or polygonal space surrounding the High Altar, is divided into radiating chapels, symbolic of the radiating crown of thorns on the Divine Saviour's head, represented by the High Altar.

(b.) The sanctuary was in course of time raised much higher than the nave, thus giving an opportunity for the better arrangement of the crypt underneath, which was copied from the older basilicas. The real object of this crypt or subterranean vaulted chapel is to serve as a resting place for the body of some saint. During life, the faithful loved to pray on the graves of their sainted brethren gone before, and in death they wished to rest in their immediate neighbourhood. In this way the Church continued without any break the Lord's teaching concerning our 'communion' with the faithful departed. In the days of the first martyrs the priest celebrated Holy Mass on the graves of those witnesses to the faith; later on the Holy Sacrifice was offered above the crypt in which such a body or bodies were deposited, and when, as is often the case in our times, such a crypt does not exist, then the altar stone at least does and must contain the relics of one or more saints.

(c.) In imitation of the low marble wall or railing, which in the old basilica separated the

choir from the nave, the mediæval churches were for that purpose provided with a screen, as a rule most beautifully carved in wood or stone. In most modern churches this screen is replaced by the communion rails.

*d.* In this manner choir and nave were both united and separated, and the distinction thus expressed was maintained throughout the entire construction of the edifice. Symbolic meanings abound here. The ideas of earth and heaven, of time and eternity, of temporal and spiritual jurisdiction, arose almost spontaneously. This separation or distinction was effected principally by

### The Arch of Triumph

The name given to the arch spanning the semi-circular apse, in which the church always terminated. Its name was most fitting, as it led from the nave (the church militant) to the sanctuary, (the church triumphant) or from the trials and difficulties of this life to eternal bliss, here represented by the Lord's presence in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

As the Saviour has obtained this blessing for us by His death on the Cross, it was but a natural and grateful expression of Christian faith, that the Rood-loft or Jube-gallery, carrying in triumph the Holy Rood or Crucifix, should

be placed on high between nave and choir. Where this Rood-loft was wanting, a transverse beam (the Apostle beam) uniting the apsidal walls, bore the Holy Rood, and where even



FIG. 11.—'Hail, Sacred Cross,  
our only hope.'

this beam was missing, the Holy Rood was suspended from the vaulting. Here as well as throughout the whole church we find the same hope-inspiring starting point of the spiritual life, viz: that the passion

and the death of Christ our Lord have wrought our redemption and our victory.

### The Baptistry

1. In a great many celebrated churches the Baptistry became a glorious treasure-house of art and iconography on account of its rich symbolic importance. The leading ideas are:

(a) The Baptistry is separated from the nave by a wall, more commonly by a railing, because the person entering there has not yet been cleansed in holy Baptism. The northern aisle was considered the proper position for it, as symbolic of the region of paganism and sin, and for this reason the church prescribed that it should be on that side.

(b) It is situated near the main entrance to



the Church, because it gives admission to the communion of the faithful and the partaking of the sacraments.

2. Its form is either square (the world, sin), or round (the grace of God), or octagonal (perfection).

3. Holy Baptism is conferred in the name of the Blessed Trinity. This leading principle has given rise to a continual symbolic use of the number three. We find it in the threefold forsaking of the devil, the threefold confession of faith, the threefold ablution with water. Moreover in olden times three steps had to be descended to reach the baptistery and again to be ascended to enter the church-aisle.

4. The most important object in this chapel is the baptismal-font. Symbolism directs that it should be made of stone, in commemoration of the rock from which water flowed miraculously at the command and the touch of Moses, to allay the thirst of the Jews parching in the desert. Another reason why it should be of stone is, that Christ our Lord, who is called 'the fountain of living waters' is also 'the Rock' of His holy Church.

5. The prevailing emblematic representations of holy Baptism have all been derived from the liturgy of the Church for Holy Saturday, when the Baptismal water is solemnly

consecrated. Art had only to copy here. The principal emblems are: the flood; the passage of the Red Sea; the changing of undrinkable into sweet water; the crossing of Jordan; the miraculous changing of water into wine at the marriage feast in Cana; the Baptism of Christ in the Jordan; the Baptism of Cornelius; the walking on the waters; the opening of the Saviour's side from which water flowed and blood; the four streams of paradise: Phison, Gehon, Tigris and Euphrates, sending their fructifying waters to the four regions of the world, symbolic prototypes of the apostles, going forth to bring new life to the world by the waters of holy Baptism.

In addition we find representations of symbolic animals, of fish, deer, lamb, wolf, etc., the meaning of which will be explained later on in the chapter on iconography. The principal arrangements being herewith indicated, we now proceed to consider the various component parts.

## B.—COMPONENT PARTS.

### The Church Door.

1. Symbolism meets us on the very threshold of the church and points to the door as a symbol of the Blessed Saviour, who said of Himself: 'I am the door. By Me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved.' Thence we often find on the painted glass of the window above the western entrance a representation of Christ as the Good Shepherd, surrounded by His flock. Likewise does the door remind us of the soul spoken of in Holy Writ, who full of loving desire after Christ, exclaims: 'I stand at the door and knock'; which again finds its counterpart in the saying of our Lord: 'Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'

2. Where the door in its spiritual aspect is emblematic of Christ, in its material aspect it is the emblem of safety against outside attacks, and (when open) of invitation addressed to all pilgrims on earth to enter its portals.

3. Moreover the pious spirit of our fathers recognized in the church-door two other symbols; first that of the 'porta coeli' the 'gate of heaven,' and secondly that of the

Blessed Virgin the Mother of God, because in the same way as Christ our Lord came into the world through her, so the Christian enters into the kingdom of heaven through her intercession.

We now enter the church and put our feet on

#### The Church Floor,

which carrying all that enter, is symbolic of holy faith itself, that supports us all; or according to Durandus, who considers it more in connection with the burden it has to bear, it is a symbol of the poor and needy. The general idea therefore is that of humility, making man bend down in body and spirit after the manner of King David, crying out in the anguish of his heart: 'My soul is bowed down to the ground.'

Considered again from another point of view, viz: as being trodden under foot, the floor is the emblem of sin, which the Christian must spurn with his heel; and hence it would not be in good taste to embellish the church pavement with symbols of venerable subjects.

#### The Stones

The main constituents of the church edifice are the Stones. Durandus, the great symbolist of the thirteenth century, expresses the symbolic principle underlying the material con-

struction in the following words: 'The church is the house of the Lord, strongly built and resting on the foundation of Apostles and Prophets, whilst Christ Himself is the corner stone, preserving all in proper strength and shape.'

1. The Apostles therefore are the foundations; but, explains Pope Innocent III, they are not the first or principal one, for they again rest on a first, on a divine foundation, the holy mountain, the immovable rock, which is Christ our Lord.' This was already expressed by Saint Paul saying: 'Another foundation no man can lay except the one which has been laid by Christ Jesus.' He is indeed the corner-stone, the stone of foundation, the first stone (*lapis primarius*) on which all the others are considered to rest. This is the reason why a bishop or his representative when laying the 'first stone' of a new church, blesses the same with great solemnity and impresses on it the 'seal of Christ.' (See woodcut).

2. The remaining mass of stones, constituting the edifice, is symbolic of the number of the faithful united into one spiritual body in the whole Catholic Church. These material stones represent the living ones out of which the Church of Christ



FIG. 12.—'Christ, 'the corner-stone of Holy Church.'

is built up, as the Church sings in her hymn of dedication: 'Coelestis urbs,' 'Heavenly city.'

Further, the material stones are united together with mortar, and bear and support each other till the full height of the building is reached, representing thereby, according to Saint Augustine, that harmony and love which unites all the brethren in religion to their mutual support. The degree of importance attached to any individual stone, with regard to the function it exercises, is not lost sight of in symbolism. Those for instance, that on account of their position require most careful trimming and squaring at the hands of able workmen, represent the saints of God, shaped by hammer and chisel of trial and suffering and so rendered fit to become the glory and the strength of the Church of God.

A very rich symbolism is likewise attached to the

### Church Walls

We have stated already that the system of church symbolism rests to a considerable extent on the ceremonial for church dedication. The bishop, for instance, traces on the church floor strewn with ashes in two diagonal lines the letters of the Greek and Latin alphabets. These lines are drawn from left to right and vice versa, symbolically expressing, that the

doctrines of faith after having been preached to the Jews (left side) and being rejected by them, were offered to the heathen (right side) and in the last days shall again return to Israel.

1. The most ancient church literature accepted already a similar high symbolism of the two pairs of parallel walls, left and right or south and north walls, and front and back or west and east walls. The first pair symbolized Jews and Heathens or the two main divisions of the human race, united in Christ the cornerstone. The second pair symbolized the clergy and laity and their union in our Lord Jesus Christ.

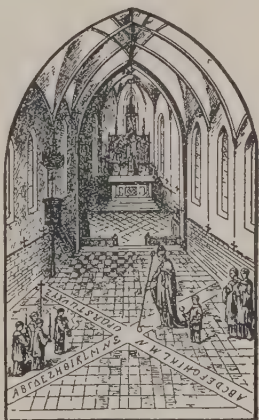


FIG. 13.—Consecration of a Church.

2. Taken together the two pairs of walls form a 'quadrilateral' to which symbolism attached the meaning of the four Evangelists, the four master-builders of the church.

3. The four walls stretch themselves in the three directions of space, symbolizing by 'height' the elevation to which real virtue

must ascend; by 'length' the indefatigable patience in bearing the burden of earthly troubles, and by 'width' the Christian love which knows how to extend itself to all and everything.

4. In such and several more particular ways, symbolism read in this complex of walls noble lessons for the guidance of life for clergy and

laity. Countless sermons, spiritual books and poems, often full of the highest art and sentiment and composed for the instruction of the persons concerned are still in existence, in which those very walls are considered in relation to the apostolic calling of preachers, the vows of the monastic state, or the degrees and stages of perfection. It would be highly interesting to quote some of these at length, but as we must confine ourselves in these pages to a

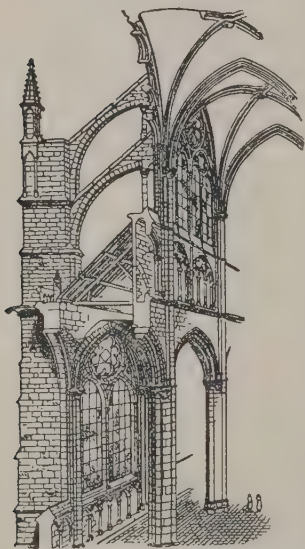


FIG. 14.—Section of a Gothic Cathedral, showing construction: pillars, windows, pointed arches, flying buttresses, supporting buttresses.



general treatment of church-symbolism, we may not leave our present course to make excursions in another direction.

5. If the walls as aggregations of stones were held as a rule to be representative of the simple faithful, the mighty pillars, piers and buttresses, with their distributing and transferring arches, were considered to represent the learned and influential ecclesiastical writers, or the kings and powerful ones of the earth, whose duty it is to support and uphold the Church by means of their intellectual and moral power.

6. But before we can lay down the symbolism of those various pillars, it is necessary to point out an important change, which church-architecture underwent, and which involved a considerable diminution of the importance of the walls. The cause of this was the gradual introduction of the Gothic style. Until that time the walls had always been the bearers of the heavily-pressing mass of the vaulted roof, demanding enormous strength for its support. The new style changed all this. The tremendous outward pressure of that ponderous superstructure became now divided over the pillars of the edifice and the corresponding buttresses outside the building, being equally distributed by transferring arches. For now the vaults were carried by supporting arches, which in their turn rest on the buttresses of

the aisles. The flying-buttress system once having been established, the Gothic church became in the main, a pillar construction. The office of the walls was now reduced to nothing more than to enclose and define a



FIG. 15.—Cross-section of Gothic church : (a) buttresses ; (b) supporting arches ; (c) vault with pointed arch ; (d) pinnacles.

certain space ; nay, it even became possible to resolve extensive wall-spaces, sometimes even almost a whole wall, into large window-bays, according to the taste of the architect. As a

natural consequence a very high importance was now attached to the

### Church-windows.

1. These openings for the admittance of light obtained such a prominent position from a decorative point of view, that the artistic beauty of a Gothic church became mainly dependent on the form and arrangement of the windows and the grouping and system of the pillars. This did not only open a new and extensive field for thoughtful and expressive ornamentation, but also for symbolic interpretation. For the better understanding of this symbolism it is necessary that we should give a short description of this window-construction.

2. The sloping stone edges of the bays, both inside and outside, were very delicately finished. In the centre of the bays mullions or perpendicular posts, usually in the form of

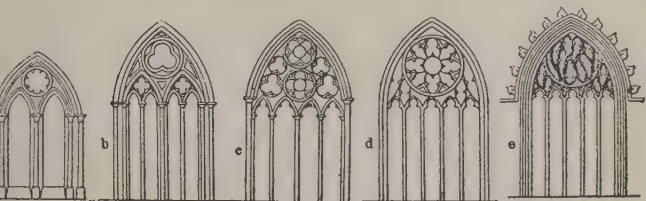


FIG. 16.—Gothic windows with tracery : (a) simple ; (b),—(d) rich (early and high Gothic) ; (e) late Gothic.

a pillar or column, were put up, and frequently each of the divisions obtained in that way was again and again subdivided in smaller compartments. The originally large bay was in this manner changed into a complex of smaller bay-groups, which seemed as it were specially created to be decorated by the stained-glass artist. Above these small groups and immediately under the pointed arch the remaining space was filled in with tracery, an ornamentation consisting of beautiful geometrical work formed by circle segments, the centres of which fall on the intersections of certain geometrical figures.

3. The decorative effect of this arrangement may be witnessed any bright day in our churches, when the afternoon sun sends its glowing rays through the coloured window-panes and scatters in profusion a rich variety of hues over the altar, or creates an atmosphere of warm-toned, many-tinted rays of light throughout the lofty nave and aisles. Then there hovers through our temples an indescribable spirit of longing desire for 'the Light of Light' enthroned in the highest heavens. These windows are symbolic of the colour-treasures of the heavenly Jerusalem, the brightness of which is as of diamonds, of jaspis and crystal. They are embellished, the symbolists tell us, with the precious stones of

the Apocalypse ; they send out the glittering rays of the fiery jaspis, the blue sapphire, the green emerald, of hyacinth and amethyst, flooding all with a profusion of golden light.

A great variety of mystic meanings was attached to those windows, the smallest particulars of which were not overlooked by symbolism, as will be seen even in tracing only the main lines on which it set to work. The purpose of any window whatever is to admit light and to ward off rain and wind. Hence Durandus says : 'the church windows are symbolic of the Holy Scriptures and of the writings of the Fathers, for both admit the glorious light of God's true sun into the hearts of the faithful, and at the same time protect them against anything that might do them harm.'

4. The splayed windows are internally much wider than on the outside. This fact found a pregnant explanation in the words of Saint Augustine : 'the Holy Scriptures possess a deep inward meaning, far more difficult to grasp than the words in their literal sense seem to convey.'

5. A mullion divides the window-bay in two equal parts and proclaims in that manner the double commandment of love towards God and towards the neighbour, out of which the whole moral teaching of the Church of Christ has

been evolved. These are the symbolic meanings of the church-window in general, but as those windows may be found in a variety of forms, symbolism has taken special notice of them all.

6. The bays at the east-end or the windows of the apse are always considered as a unit; together they give expression to one idea. When consisting of three divisions, they are symbolic of the Blessed Trinity; when of five, they are symbolic of the five precious wounds of the Saviour, the five fountains of divine grace, and therefore of the Passion; when of seven, they represent the seven Sacraments or the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost.

In monastic churches they represent as a rule the shining example of the Saints belonging to that particular order, or of the Apostolic men of the Old and the New Testament, in the first place of the Apostles themselves.

7. A still more profound and more thoroughly devout meaning was attached to those glorious east windows—called by our fathers, ‘the lucida’ or ‘the light-giving ones’ which shed the sparkling lustre of their colours over the Altar of the Lord. Placed in the east and receiving the spotless light of the morning sun, that they transmitted over the crowd of the faithful assembled for worship in the nave, symbolism points to them as an emblem of the

Virgin Mother of God, the Gate of Heaven, through which the most Holy Son of God entered the world in the Eastern land, to bring light and life to the whole earth.

Still the east window did not stand alone in its high symbolic meaning. On the west, and frequently also in the transept on the north and south side, we find the peculiar circular window, called a wheel or rose window. Its circular shape symbolizes the infinite perfection of the Almighty, or the intimate communion of the soul with God and with the company of saints in heaven. Moreover this wheel or rose window glitters as a rose of light and for that reason it is an emblem of the beauty of Christ, the reflection of the Heavenly Father. Finally, deep and tenderly feeling mediæval piety never lost an opportunity for remembering the Immaculate Mother of God, and found therefore in the rose window also an emblem of her, who was called the flower of creation, the mystical rose, Mary.

We now turn to consider the symbolism attached to

#### The Pillars.

Pillars, columns, pilasters, whatever name they may bear and whatever office they may fulfil, are all intimately joined together by continuous arches, carrying the full burden of

the vaulted roof. The round pillars may be considered the kernel round which the pilasters are placed for auxiliary and decorative purposes.

1. The corresponding symbolism is of great variety, and we can only give here a few of the leading principles common to all.

The immovable pillar considered by itself is a natural symbol of the Church of God, which, according to St Paul, is 'the pillar and the ground of truth' in its manifold forms and parts. Firmly planted in the bedrock, Christ, it rises up heavenward, rendering visible to the eyes of all the lofty edifice of the Lord's teaching.

2. It was, however, more customary to consider the pillars either in relation to each other or in relation to the entire structure they were designed to support. The Old Testament offered many prototypes in the symbolism of the strong but perishable pillars of the Jewish temple and of its silver columns, mentioned in the Canticle of Solomon and in the Book of Wisdom.

3. The mystic descriptions of the Apocalypse were likewise a source of great importance. There it is mentioned, that the names of the twelve Apostles are engraved on the twelve columns of the heavenly Jerusalem; and it is quite obvious that this should directly be



applied to the columns of the church, especially if they were twelve in number, and that they should be considered as symbols of the chosen Twelve, ever sustaining and upholding the Holy Church of God planted in the midst of the nations of the earth.

4. It followed almost as a natural consequence, that the bases of those columns, symbolizing the Apostles, should be considered to represent the Prophets of the Old Law. This idea was so accurately followed up, that the four greater Prophets were considered as the supporters of the four Evangelists, to whom the four most important pillars were assigned, viz., those carrying the arches supporting the dome, whilst the twelve minor Prophets were designated as the bearers of the twelve Apostles, thereby expressing the fact, that the latter had been elected to propagate the fulness of revelation, the foundations of which had been prepared in a dim and imperfect manner by the former.

The holy Apostles Peter, James and John occupied here the first rank. This was almost unavoidable on account of the words of Saint Paul in his epistle to the Galatians, where he names them individually as 'the pillars of the Church of Christ.' On the other hand no special place was assigned to Saint Paul or Saint Barnabas, on the ground that they had

only subsequently been added to the Apostolic College.

5. There is one more ancient symbolic view of the pillars which we want to refer to. It is the view mentioned already by Honorius of Autun, according to which the bases of the columns do not represent the prophets, but the apostles, whilst the columns themselves are symbolic of their successors, bishops, prelates, missionaries, in a word of all those who support and propagate the Christian faith.

### The Vaulted Roof.

1. The symbolism of the vaulted roof has undergone many changes in keeping with the form or the purpose of the structure. The leading principle of the various meanings was always the representation of a more sublime existence. In very early days the roof of the basilica was only a wooden one, resting simply on its tie-beams. These, the binding and supporting parts, were held symbolic of the holy doctors of the Church, who in word and example showed themselves the powerful protectors of the Church of God.

2. Later on, Gothic architecture, so absolutely differing from the basilica-style, brought its all penetrating principle to bear on every form, part and ornament and especially

on the vaulting, as if the 'Sursum corda' spoken by the priest at the altar, were materialized in the very lines and stones of the temple itself. For here everything mounts most stately upwards, gables and finials, pillars and columns, choir and nave, all pointing in exultant hope to heaven.

3. The roof, consisting of numerous vaults, was united into one glorious decorative of square and stellar panels, at first in sober simplicity, later on (fourteenth century) in a richness and exuberance, turning at times even to a redundancy of embellishment. The entire vaulting, considered from the interior and as a complete whole, was looked upon as symbolizing the highest heaven. This idea was more specially attached to the roofing of the sanctuary, where the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was offered, whilst the vaulting of the nave was considered to represent the firmament.

4. Here we must call to mind what has been said before of the symbolic meaning of 'a vessel' as the 'Barque of Peter' carrying its freight of living souls across the ocean of the world, over which the hand of God has spanned the firmament. This enables us to understand, why the vaulting of the nave was treated as the firmament, surrounding in its radiant beauty the visible creation. And

this explains the inspiration of the noble art of painting, in covering those glorious vaults, with sun and moon and stars, with angels and men and animals, thus producing in gracious form and glowing colour the 'Benedicite,' the laudatory hymn of Holy Church, that calls on all created beings to praise the Lord of Lords.

1. Before closing this chapter we want to add a few words on the symbolism of the principal objects found in every church. Except with regard to the altar, to which we dedicate the whole of the following chapter, there is but little symbolism that calls for explanation in pulpit, confessional or communion rail.

2. Concerning the pulpit, the chair of truth, we must observe that its proper place is at the right or Gospel-side, a logical consequence of the symbolic meaning attached to that position, about which we spoke at length in a former chapter. The symbolism of its decoration is found in the view that considers it as the Mountain on which Our Blessed Saviour taught the multitude. Hence we find on it representations of the Sermon on the Mount, of the four Evangelists, the four cardi-



FIG. 17. —St Peter with the two keys: the Sacrament of Penance.

nal and the three theological virtues, as the main argument of all preaching, of the mission of the Apostles, of Greek and Latin Fathers, great religious orators, in a word all types and principal subjects of Christian preaching and sacred eloquence.

3. The Confessional in its present form dates only from the seventeenth century and is therefore without any traditional symbolism. The motive of its decoration is taken from the purpose it has to serve, which is perfectly expressed by the more solemn appellation of 'tribunal of penance.' When decorated with statuary we find the images of those saints that are more appropriately connected with the Sacrament of Penance, as for instance, Saint Peter, who first received the power of the keys, Saint John Nepomuc, the first martyr to the seal of confession, etc. When groups and types of penitents are used, we find : the prodigal son returning to his father ; the Good Shepherd looking for or carrying the lost sheep ; King David confessing his guilt ; Mary, the sister of Moses, bewailing her sin ; Mary Magdalen ; the proud Pharisee and the humble publican ; the good Samaritan, treating the wounds of the stricken and robbed traveller ;—



FIG. 18.—The Good Shepherd.

in a word, all the narratives and parables of our Lord, in which we are reminded of God's mercy towards the penitent sinner. Lastly, as the highest and most touching symbols of the

Divine love for sinful man, various scenes from our Lord's passion and death are sometimes represented.



FIG. 19.—Symbols of the Priesthood. The Bl. Sacrament resting on a Missal: a stola.

4. The Communion rail is always decorated with the symbols and emblems of the Most Blessed Sacrament, which we shall deal with in the chapter on iconography.

## C—THE ALTAR

1. The Christian altar finds its constant prototype in the Old Testament.

Immediately after the deluge Noah built unto the Lord a place of sacrifice. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but above all Moses and Solomon, dedicated their altars to Jehovah, and for many centuries the burnt offerings and holocausts in the glorious temple of Jerusalem, formed the very centre of the entire Jewish community.

2. Nevertheless all those ancient sacrifices were but vague indications of the one great and acceptable sacrifice on Calvary which, in an unbloody manner, is for ever continued in our churches. They were, as Saint Augustine tells us, nothing else but prototypes foreshadowing and symbolizing in manifold ways that one Sacrifice of Christ, commemorated by our holy sacrifice of the Mass.

3. Hence the altar is the life-principle, the very heart of the Catholic temple, which derives all its meaning from this holy central point; and just as the whole church edifice reflects a threefold state (the militant, the

suffering and the triumphant church) so too the altar bears a threefold aspect, for it is considered :

(a) As the place of adoration, where the prayers and aspirations of the faithful are offered ; as a figure therefore of the whole Christian church and of every Catholic soul in particular ;

(b) As the place of sacrifice, where Holy Mass is offered. Under this aspect the altar is most justly called, the symbol of the Lord's Table in the hall of the Last Supper in Jerusalem, of the Cross of Christ, of the Holy Sepulchre, or as Saint Ambrose and the Pontificale express it, of the Body of the Lord. The altar table (*mensa*), which according to the Church ordinances ought to be of stone, is the symbol of that mystical stone rejected by the Jews and become the cornerstone of the new building of grace (the Christian faith) ; or again, a symbol of that stone, which being set loose without the hands of man, rolled down and became a mighty mountain (the Church).

(c) The dwelling-place of the Lord, the repository of His Sacred Body and Blood. As such, the altar was figuratively called : the abode of God among men ; the altar of the heavenly Jerusalem, or in the language of the Apocalypse ' the throne of the Lamb.'



## Division.

The altar is divided in an upper and a lower part. The lower part, constituting the real altar, is consecrated by the bishop. It consists of the altar steps, the altar height and the altar table, with the depository for the relics. A short explanation will give us an idea of the numerous symbolic meanings that are attached to it, and of which we shall indicate the most prominent. The second or upper portion is of less importance and contains the tabernacle, the place for the crucifix, and for the candles.

## The Lower Part.

1. We must first call to mind, that in the primitive Church the Most Holy Sacrifice was celebrated in the catacombs on the graves of the martyrs. This venerable usage has been made a law of church-ritual, prescribing that every altar stone, on which the Holy Sacrifice is offered, shall contain a receptacle enclosing relics of saints, fulfilling thereby to the letter the words of the rite of consecration: 'Under the altar you have found your resting-place, ye saints of God.'

2. In the course of time many kinds of altar came into existence, and with them countless meanings and symbolic explanations.

But however numerous and full of piety those explanations may be, as offered by Saint Augustine, Saint Ambrose and Saint Polycarp, or collected by Saint Bonaventure in his analysis and commentary of the 25th Psalm, they never took such hold on the hearts of the faithful as the plain and obvious comparison to the Table of the Lord's Last Supper.

3. And whereas this unbloody Sacrifice of the Mass derived its highest meaning from the bloody Sacrifice on Calvary, it followed as a matter of course, that the Sacred Cross of our Lord was recognized as the real prototype of the altar, even to such an extent, that Saint Thomas Aquinas expresses the common feeling of his contemporaries when he writes: 'The altar is the representation of the cross on which Christ was truly personally sacrificed on Calvary.'

This is the real central idea, in which is rooted the whole system of symbolism connected with the altar and the holy Sacrifice of the Mass and out of which it has been developed in countless pious forms and reflections.

4. When we consider the various parts in detail, we perceive at once that the altar is erected on an elevation, (suppedaneum) a symbol of the mountain of suffering, where Christ, the High Priest of the New Law, offered Himself in Bloody Sacrifice.

Three steps lead up to this place, reminding us in symbolic manner that every Holy Mass is begun and offered up in the name of the Blessed Trinity.

The precise spot of oblation is the altar table, and more especially the consecrated altar stone, symbolizing Christ 'the Anointed One,' who made Himself both the corner-stone and the key-stone of Holy Church. This train of ideas is further developed by symbolism. Under the singing of Psalm and antiphon the Bishop has anointed the five crosses hewn in the stone slabs, in the following order

|    |    |    |
|----|----|----|
| +2 |    | 5+ |
|    | +1 |    |
| +4 |    | 3+ |

These five crosses symbolize the five wounds of the Saviour, the central one standing for the

wound in the Lord's side.

The altar is subsequently covered with a threefold linen cloth, symbolizing the various pieces of linen in which Joseph of Arimathea wrapped the Body of the Saviour for burial. The same symbolism is attached to the corporal, the linen cloth on which during Holy Mass the Chalice and the Host are placed. The linen must be white and spotless, symbolizing in its colour both the swaddling cloths of the Divine Infant and the winding sheet of the dead Jesus. This idea led again to a mystic

comparison between the black guilt of sin of our first father, Adam, and the spotless innocence of the second Adam, the name frequently given to our Divine Lord by symbolism.

5. During Holy Mass the consecrated species are placed on the altar-stone, till they are consumed by the officiating priest at the Holy Communion, but the consecrated elements that are preserved for Adoration and for the Communion of the faithful, are placed in the tabernacle, the permanent abode of Our Divine Lord in His most Blessed Sacrament. The tabernacle, however, being of comparatively recent origin, the question has been raised about the manner in which in olden times the Blessed Sacrament was reserved. We shall state in a few words the results of the highly interesting researches in this matter. From the very earliest days the Sacred Host was with great reverence reserved for the use of the sick and the absent, though not in the churches. It was usually kept in the abode of the bishop or the priest, and even in the houses of virtuous and trustworthy laymen. But from the beginning of the fourth century onward, when public places of worship were freely erected, the Blessed Sacrament was reserved exclusively in the churches, in a separate room, that went by the name of

pastophorium or sacrarium. When at a later period the ciborium was erected over the altar, the Blessed Sacrament was reserved in a vessel of precious metal, suspending from the ciborium and usually shaped in the form of a dove (peristerium), symbolizing the Love of Christ or the Holy Ghost. The Holy Eucharist, wrapped in fine linen, was enclosed within the Dove, which as a rule was enshrined in another less costly vessel, a kind of tabernacle made in the shape of a small tower or of a simple box.



FIG 20.—Eucharistic-dove.

## The Upper Part of the Altar.

### 1. The Tabernacle,

as it is found at present on our altars, points back to its remote prototype in the Old Testament, the cloud-covered tent-abode of Jehovah, where God in some mysterious way dwelt among His chosen people. Here He dwells in our midst, not in an awe-inspiring form as of old, but under the humble veil of the Sacramental bread. It is called in the most true sense of the word 'the dwelling-place of the Lord,' 'the throne of His grace,' 'the Seat of uncreated Wisdom,' and even more

than that 'the new heaven on earth, wonderingly admired by the angels of God.'

2. The devout symbolists of the middle ages did not forget the Virgin Mother here, but they explained the tabernacle as a symbol of her, the chosen sanctuary, in which the Redeemer of the world had deigned to take up His abode.

3. Internally the tabernacle was reverently adorned and either covered with gold or more generally with some precious white material, (silk, damask, gold brocade), white, the perfectly pure, being the symbolic colour of 'the King of Virgins.'

Externally the tabernacle was usually surrounded with a covering (conopeum) or, as is still frequently the case at present, the front was veiled with a curtain, indicating 'the resting-place of the hidden God.' A such-like covering has always been accepted as a scriptural emblem of high veneration, signifying that man expresses himself unworthy to behold his God face to face.

4. The same sublime, symbolic character was attached to the Baldachino that, in the middle ages and even long before that period, was erected over the tabernacle or resting on four columns, overshadowed the entire altar (ciborium). The latter is at present to be found only in a very few churches. As a kind of substitute, but conveying the same symbolic

idea, we frequently find nowadays on both sides of the altar curtains, hanging down from small columns (*tetravela*), and likewise a veil before the Blessed Sacrament.

5. This worthy and properly liturgical decoration of the altar bears the two-fold meaning of love and veneration. It spreads out this glittering canopy as a protection over the Holy of Holies, and at the same time surrounds the Divine Master with a mystic veil, that sinful man might not look upon his God unveiled, just as the golden cherubim covered the ark of the covenant with their wings, or the seraphim of the prophet's vision hid their faces from the light of His countenance.

6. The same symbolic meaning is attached to the veil covering the ciborium or pyx, to the canopy carried above the Blessed Sacrament in solemn processions, and even, though in less degree, to the Baldachinos over the statues of saints.

7. On festive occasions the altar is frequently adorned with natural flowers (sometimes unavoidably with artificial ones) a token of that loving adoration, that offers the choicest and the most delicate of nature's products to do homage to the God of Love.

8. This is the purpose likewise of



FIG. 21.—Baldachino erected over a statue.

the multitude of wax candles lighted on such festivals, and of the simple pair of them, prescribed by the liturgy for the celebration of Holy Mass. The proper place assigned to these candles is the retable of the altar, which reminds us of the mound erected over the graves of the early martyrs, on which formerly the Holy Sacrifice was offered. For the whole liturgy of the Church, and more especially that of Holy Mass, constantly brings to our remembrance the memory of our brethren in the faith of the past and the present.

It would be an impossible task to attempt within our limited space the full enumeration of the countless symbolic meanings attached to these 'pure waxlights.' We can only find space for the most prominent. They symbolically indicate Him, who came down from heaven 'for the illumination of all who were sitting in the darkness and the shadows of death,' Christ our Lord, to whom honour is shown also by the ever-burning altar-lamp.

The candle being consumed whilst spreading its light, symbolically indicates our Lord's sacrificial death that brought salvation to the world.

The white wax produced by the pure bee symbolizes the human nativity of the Word made flesh in the womb of the spotless Virgin-Mother. Hugh of St Victor explains this in



the following manner, giving us thereby an instance of the purest mediæval symbolism: 'Just as wax is formed from the juice of spotless flowers in the virginal body of the bee, and this, made into a candle, surrounds the wick, and from the union of these two light is produced, so in like manner the Body of the Lord, taken from the spotless Virgin-Mother and surrounding His glorious soul, when united to His Divine nature, sheds its light over all creation.'

### 9. The Crucifix

is a necessary feature of the altar and must be set in such a position, that it shall be visible to the faithful as well as to the priest. This liturgical ordinance calls for no further explanation, when we consider that the Crucifix symbolizes:

(a) That the Altar is the Golgotha of the New Testament, where in unbloody manner, the same sacrifice is offered that the Redeemer in a bloody manner offered on the Cross outside Jerusalem.

(b) That during Holy Mass both priest and laymen must lovingly call to mind the expiatory death of their Divine Master.

10. In the immediate neighbourhood of the altar, (on the left side) though not forming an

integral part of it, is found the piscina, a small basin in which the water used at the 'lavabo', or for the washing of the corporals and purificators, is poured out. This too has its symbolic meaning. It is compared to the laver of the Jews for the cleansing of hands for ritual purposes, and is held as an emblem of the mercy of God, cleansing the soul of the impurity of sin. The same meaning is attached also to the ceremony of the finger-washing during the Holy Sacrifice.

Having given this general idea of the symbolic meanings of the church-edifice, we now proceed to discuss its ornamentation in the following chapter, treating of the main principles of iconography.

## CHURCH ICONOGRAPHY



# CHURCH ICONOGRAPHY

## I.—INTRODUCTION

A FEW preliminary remarks are necessary to explain sundry terms that will be frequently used in the following pages. Iconography is the description of the symbolic meanings attached to representations, either painted or sculptured, or in other words, the interpretation of the special language in which the products of art communicate something to the beholder. Anyone, for instance, contemplating a picture of Saint John Nepomuc, the martyr for the seal of confession, when seeing the finger placed



FIG. 22.—St John Nepomuc.

on the lips, will understand without any difficulty, that the artist wanted to express the idea of secrecy, because this particular gesture has been accepted as the general token or symbol of enjoining silence. In so far any such token or attitude characterizes some particular person or persons, it is called in art, the attribute of such persons, as is the case

with the representation of the holy martyr just mentioned.

Where there is reason for strictly scientific distinction, the term 'emblem' is used when comparing the identical qualities of two otherwise substantially differing things. The lily, for instance, is considered the emblem of holy purity, on account of the spotless whiteness they possess in common. If the resemblance indicated affects either action or fact, the expression 'figure' is more appropriately used. So the fabulous bird phoenix, which was believed to rise again from its ashes, is called a figure of the Lord's Resurrection. Frequently however these niceties of distinction are not closely adhered to in practice and the terms are used promiscuously. When the resemblance concerns a personage of the Old Testament, with the additional sense of foreshadowing another personage of higher perfection who appeared at a later time, then the former is named the prototype and the latter the type. So, for example, Isaac carrying the wood on which Abraham intended to offer him in sacrifice, is a prototype of our Blessed Saviour carrying His Cross on the road to Calvary. We find in Holy Writ great abundance of such prototypes, both persons and things, that in various ways foreshadowed the Redeemer, for as the Fathers of the Church tell us, the whole history

of Israel and its heroes, the entire Old Testament, is nothing else but one prototype of the New, one long protracted dawn of the rising Sun of justice.

It would be a rather difficult task to try and find a Catholic church without statues or images. We may say with almost absolute certainty, that there never was one, for it would be completely at variance with the educational manner of the Church, which was not founded for learned people only, but was meant to be a universal institution embracing even the most simple and uneducated folk. 'Images are eloquent teachers' was the common saying of mediæval Churchmen. They found additional reasons for this opinion in the Old Testament, where we read that Moses, at the express command of God, ordered that the images of Cherubim should be woven in the veil of the sanctuary, that the statues of Cherubim should be placed on the ark of the Covenant and that the brazen serpent should be erected in the desert, that the people might gaze upon it and be healed from the poisonous effects of the bite of the snakes, sent by God for their punishment. This brazen serpent moreover, has always been considered as a prophetic emblem of the world's Redeemer.

1. The ancient iconographers could never

have imagined that, even at the present time, there still would be found a goodly number of ridiculous non-Catholics, always prattling about the dangers of idol-worship in the Catholic Church. We do not intend to waste either time or space on this nonsense, always heartily laughed at by every Catholic, on account of the flagrant ignorance of Catholic doctrine usually displayed by such people. The Church considered such danger so unlikely, even among the most uncivilised of her children, that she never thought it necessary to turn iconoclast, that is to abolish and even to destroy images and statues.

2. On the contrary, with consummate wisdom and in perfect agreement with ordinary human piety, that holds in veneration the effigies of parents and friends, the Church has always shown honour to the representations of her founders and of her saintly and heroic members. She, the enlightened teacher of the nations, encouraged this practice for various reasons, which Saint Thomas has summed up in the following manner. Holy images serve (*a*) for the instruction of the unlettered, who find in them a substitute for the written word; (*b*) for the ever-visible commemoration of the Mystery of the Incarnation, and of everything connected with it, as well as of the examples given by the Saints of God; (*c*) for the increase of the



religious spirit, which is much more strengthened by the combination of sight and hearing than by hearing alone.

3. If the Church made profitable use of the educational force of images, the various arts too, turned this to their benefit. For, as a modern ecclesiologist writes, 'wherever the Church took the different arts into her service, there the widest possible field was opened for the descriptive and instructive labours of iconography. It was found at work in countless forms in cathedrals, in baptisteries, and mortuary chapels, in votive, pilgrimage and convent-churches, in cloisters, chantries and various other buildings. It found utterance in the coloured glories of the burnt-glass windows, in the setting and decoration of the doorways, as well as of the walls and pillars and columns. It embellished the rich baptismal fonts, the enamelled and golden retables of the high altar, and the many-panelled altar-pieces. It was present everywhere, not only inside the churches but on the outside as well, it covered them with an abundance of plastic figures and statues in porches, gables, piers and spires, causing everywhere something beautiful to be felt, something noble to be contemplated.

4. No one who has followed thus far this exposition of the development of Church-

symbolism will be astonished at the fact, that in course of time these countless discriminating representations of holy persons and things, in myriads of Catholic churches, called into existence a great many standing principles and enlarged enormously the domain of iconography.

An iconographic description of the various saints should really be prepared for every church in particular, if we wish to realize the intention of the church, that those several representations should contribute to the instruction of the faithful. It is our most ardent desire, that this idea should be laid hold of by competent men, and that everywhere such detailed descriptions should be given of the local churches. And in fact, it is just for the furtherance of this movement, that we offer here the fundamental principles of iconography, which may serve as the foundation for this very desirable treatment of the various churches in the towns and rural districts of the country.

As it is absolutely impossible to make separate mention of the countless representations of the saints, we must confine ourselves to the bare mentioning of the main principles observed in portraying saints of various classes. We shall only make an exception with regard to our Blessed Saviour and the Blessed Virgin

Mary, and enter more in detail about them, both on account of their paramount dignity, and of their being found in every Catholic church, frequently even under various aspects.

## II.—GOD.

### A.—The Most Blessed Trinity.

1. Among the personal attributes of the Divinity the crossed nimbus and the gloria really take the first place, but they will be dealt with separately in Chapter IV. In this place we shall only make special mention of the Royal throne. 'The Lord shall rule the nations seated on His holy throne' says Holy Writ. Being seated is expressive (according to ecclesiastical art and the notions of antiquity) of the idea of power over subjects, always represented in standing or kneeling attitude.

A secondary attribute of the Divinity consists in the feet being unshod, the symbol of heavenly life. We find this applied also in the representations of Angels and Apostles, whilst footgear in symbolism signifies terrestrial origin or terrestrial sphere of action.

2. The representations of the Blessed Trinity are necessarily very restricted, a natural consequence of the impotence of the artist to make material forms give expression to the Divinity of God the Father and God the Holy Ghost.

The artists had much wider scope with the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, who as God made Man, could be portrayed in the body. Hence we find the Blessed Trinity usually depicted in this way: God the Father supports on both sides the transverse beam of a cross to which



FIG. 23.—The Blessed Trinity.

His Divine Son is nailed, whilst the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove hovers between; or the First and Second Persons hold a book between them, the Book of Life or the Book of Revelation, whilst the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove is visible above their heads.

3. Symbolic figures of the Blessed Trinity are: the equilateral triangle, the three-leaved clover, intersecting circles, a complex of circle segments and triangle, within which the name Jehovah is written in Hebrew characters.

4. The oldest symbolic representations of God the Father, which are very rarely met with, show: a hand lifted up in benediction,

(Creator) an imperial crown (Ruler of the world) or a head, sometimes a half figure, surrounded by heavenly clouds, symbolizing the inexpressability of the Divinity. At a later period we find the description taken from Holy Writ, viz : an aged man holding in his hands 'the book of eternal wisdom or a globe surmounted by a cross, (creation and redemption) the rainbow serving Him for seat and the earth for a footstool.'



FIG. 24.—Symbol of the Blessed Trinity.

5. The Holy Ghost was almost exclusively depicted under the form of a dove, the way He appeared at the baptism of Christ in the Jordan, and but very rarely as a human figure. In fact Pope Benedict XIV issued a rescript forbidding that the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity should be represented in any other way but in the form of a dove, or in the form of fiery tongues, the manner in which He manifested Himself in His descent on the Apostles on the day of Pentecost.

### B.—The Christ.

1. With regard to Christ we have to deal with two groups of iconographies. The first contains the representations that took their origin from the words of Isaiah : 'there is no

beauty in Him nor comeliness; and we have seen Him and there was no sightliness that we should be desirous of Him' (liii, 2). They exhibited the Blessed Saviour bereft of all human beauty by His grievous sufferings, a view maintained by very many ancient artists, on the authority of St Justin, St Basil, St Clement of Alexandria, St Cyril and Tertullian.

The second group tried to give expression to the words of the psalmist, calling Our Lord 'the most beautiful among the children of man,' which idea was strongly promoted by Origen, St Jerome, St John Chrysostom, St Ambrose, St Augustine and St John of Damascus.

2. These two standard-types (both again with and without a beard, the so-called 'ideal-type') formed for many centuries the basis for the individual personal conceptions of sacred artists. They were most strictly and universally adhered to, till the period of the late renaissance, when the ancient facial types were set aside and countless forms were found for the most diverse idealistic representations of the Saviour's personal appearance. If we wish to form some idea of their enormous variety, we have only to call to mind the wide field stretching between the coldly pagan Jupiter form of Christ, as painted by Michael Angelo, and the numerous sickly effeminate productions of the French schools of art.

The most favoured motives were : the Infant Saviour in the manger ; the Child Jesus carried in the arms of His Mother (Madonna) ; Jesus as a boy in the temple in the midst of the doctors ; Jesus as Teacher, and as worker of miracles ; Jesus as the Man of Sorrows, as Crucified, as risen from the dead, as ascending into heaven, and finally as Judge on the great day of universal judgment. Influenced by widely varying, frequently changing ideals, art tried to find a really ideal type of purity, or love, or power, or endless patience, and in many cases succeeded only, either consciously or unconsciously, to express its own national ideal type of beauty.

3. We may here incidentally say a few words about the so-called portraits of the Saviour, the existence of which has been repeatedly asserted. Saint Augustine already holds the opinion that the earth possesses no portrait either of its Redeemer or of the Blessed Virgin Mary, notwithstanding the fact, that for a long time several representations were alleged as authentic. No demonstrable historical value can therefore be attached to the portraits of the Saviour, that should have been painted by St Luke the Evangelist or carved by Nicodemus. The same must be said about the supernaturally acquired portraits, not made by human hands, among which must be



reckoned the Abgar or Edessa portraits and the correlated Veronica pictures of Byzantine origin. The latter seem to have been developed from the picture that, according to the historian Eusebius, was sent in miraculous manner to Abgar Uchomo, the ruler of Edessa. Nevertheless these representations are all the same worthy of veneration, sanctified as they are by high antiquity and universal devotion. Moreover, they were not infrequently the occasion for the granting of high favours and wondrous tokens, a fact, the moral weight of which must not be lost sight of, in judging of their value.

4. We must add a few words about a symbolic representation of more recent times, viz.: about the Sacred Heart. We say symbolic, because the nature of the idea it intends to convey is misunderstood, when the Saviour's heart is depicted too much in its natural condition. It refers to an apparition with which the Blessed Margaret Mary was favoured (1675) and in which she was exhorted to propagate this well-known devotion with its attendant promises of many special graces, the Saviour addressing her in these words: 'Behold this Heart that has such great love for men.'

### 1. The Attributes

of Christ as God (crossed nimbus, globe, crown, book or volume, roll, sceptre) offer but very

slight means to distinguish between Him and His Father. His characteristic attributes are derived from His offices as Teacher, and more especially as Redeemer. Among these the first place is taken by the attributes of His passion, viz. : the five sacred wounds in hands and feet and side, the last being inflicted by the spear of a soldier, whom tradition calls Longinus ; the crown of thorns, and the purple cloak of derision in which He was presented to the people (*Ecce Homo* pictures).

2. Then follow the instruments of His passion: the cross, the ladder, the spear, the lance with the



FIG. 25.—The Instruments of the Passion.

vinegar sponge, the jar containing vinegar, the column of flagellation, the scourges, the crown of thorns, the reed, the hammer, the three or four nails, the seamless garment, the three dice with which the soldiers cast lots over His garments, the title affixed to the cross with the initials I.N.R.I. (*Jesus Nazaræus Rex Judæorum*, *Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews*) and the lantern of the Roman guard.

#### Various Representations.

1. The Good Shepherd : Christ with pastoral

crook in hand carries a lamb (the lost sheep) on His shoulders, or extricates it from the thorns (of sin) or guides a whole flock (head of His Church).

2. The Risen Saviour : Christ holding a banner of victory with the design of the cross. This same symbol with the selfsame meaning is also borne by the Lamb of God, and it is likewise the attribute of St Michael the Archangel and of all sainted warriors.



FIG. 26.—'Agnus Dei,' the Lamb of God.

3. The conqueror of death and sin : Christ trampling under foot a serpent (the principle of evil).

4. The King of Heaven and Saviour of the world : Christ seated on a throne (cathedra) placed on the clouds or on the globe. He is clad in tunic or toga or archiepiscopal pallium, the hand stretched out in benediction. Such representations are usually called Salvator-pictures.

5. The Supreme Judge : Christ pronouncing the final judgment, seated on the clouds of heaven, surrounded by angels, the twelve apostles, various saints (the Blessed Virgin, St John the Baptist, and in more recent times, St Joseph), the traditional witnesses of this final

event. The instruments of the Passion are carried by angels. The lower part shows the human race already divided in two portions—the good and the bad.

6. The Redeemer: Christ nailed to the cross. The symbolism of the cross is the most extensive in the already large iconography of the Saviour, as countless legends and pious opinions concerning it have been laid hold of by symbolism, and manipulated in most varied and artistic manner, as will be shown more at large in the next section.

## SYMBOLISM OF THE CROSS.

### A.—The Crucifix.

1. The leading principle is, that the Church by preference adores in the Crucified Saviour the Conqueror of death, as it is written: Christ has reigned from the wood (of the cross), 'Regnavit a ligno Deus.'

It is, moreover, important to know that a great distinction has always been maintained between the historical and the liturgical representations of the cross, the latter being more in harmony with the mind of the Church. This explains why those ultra-realistic expressions of suffering possess a more artistic than ecclesiastic character, so as for instance the painful

contortion and shrinking of the muscles, the face bathed in blood, the untrimmed roughness of the cross, etc.

2. Two principal forms of cross prevail: the *crux immissa*, where the crossbeam is worked into the upright and the *crux commissa*, where the cross beam rests on top of the upright: **T**; the former, probably the historically true one, is now universally adopted.



3. To the upright beam is nailed a square board (*titulus*, title) on which the initials I.N.R.I. proclaim the royal rank of the Saviour.

4. The arms are stretched out horizontally, because as the Church teaches us, the Saviour, elevated on the cross, wishes in His Divine mercy to draw all into His embrace. (See fig. 23). The 'Jansenist cross' on the contrary represents the Saviour with the arms almost perpendicular, as far away from the earth as possible, to symbolize the small number of the elect.

5. Intimately connected with the horizontal position is the addition of a wooden block, (*suppedaneum*) to serve as a sort of foot-rest, and also the anciently affixed sedile or body-rest, both serving for the support of the Divine Sufferer.

6. With regard to the sacred feet, it may be

observed that it is better, even for anatomical reasons, to have them represented as fastened separately, that is with a nail for each foot.

7. The Sacred Head of Our Lord is turned to the right (the north). The wound caused by the spear is on the same side, likewise with the symbolic meaning, that the dying Master turned away from the Jews (the south) and directed His face and His graces to the Gentiles (the north).

The mystical explanation of the Fathers points to this wound in the Sacred Side as the source of the holy Sacraments, a teaching that has given rise to the introduction of an Angel (wearing the liturgical stola), or of a queenly figure, both symbolizing the Church, receiving in a cup or chalice the Sacred Blood and distributing it to the faithful of the Church militant (the world) or of the Church suffering (purgatory). The legendary lore of the Holy Grail is most probably connected with the spirit of this representation.

8. Although it is no longer customary to adhere to the more venerable than historic manner of ancient art, to represent the Crucified Saviour clad in a vestment reaching from the shoulders to the feet (colobium), or to the mediæval one of depicting Him in a shorter garment from the hips to the knees (perisionium), yet it is highly desirable that the ancient loin-

cloth, so generally adhibited after the vision of St Bridget, should be retained as a rather broad covering, instead of being replaced by the narrow fluttering ribbon, invented by the Masters of the renaissance period.

### B.—The Persons.

1. In the place of honour we find 'the Mother of Sorrows' (*Mater dolorosa*) whose standing position symbolizes strength in the midst of suffering, and on the other side St John, 'the disciple whom Jesus loved.' These two, together with the Cross, formed a representation called 'a Calvary.'

2. According to traditional usage, there are a few persons filling an unalterable position in the scene of Crucifixion. In the first place Angels either offering the incense of adoration, or wearing the liturgical stola and representing the Church. Occasionally only two were depicted, and in that case popular devotion named them Michael and Gabriel, the angels of the passion.

3. Secondly, the Prophets who had foretold the Lord's Passion, and the Evangelists who had narrated it. The latter are usually represented by their emblems attached to the four corners of the cross, and sometimes we find the four united in one four-headed mystical figure called a 'tetramorf,' (four-faced being).

4. Thirdly, the three Marys (Myrophori), viz: Mary the mother of James, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary the Magdalene.

5. Fourthly, Longinus the name anciently given to the soldier who pierced the Saviour's side, and Stephaton, likewise a legendary name, given to the soldier who put a sponge drenched with vinegar to the Saviour's lips. The first, moreover, was held to symbolize the cruel synagogue, the second—a convert—to symbolize the Church.

6. There were also two very important symbolic female figures, personifications of the Church and the Synagogue. The first, wearing a royal crown, cloak and banner, catches in a cup or chalice the blood flowing from the wound in the Saviour's side. The other, a blindfolded female, shows to the coming nations the prophecies about the Messiah, which she, wilfully blind, is unable to read. Her banner has dropped from her hand or lies broken on the ground. Sometimes both figures are mounted, the Church on a horse or on the mystic tetramorf, the synagogue on a stumbling ass or mule.

7. Several other persons or personifications are more or less frequently expressed on ivory reliefs, gravestones, and church windows. Among them are David and Solomon, prophesying the Saviour's death on the Cross;



three angels of the passion, representing the three theological virtues: faith, hope and charity; female figures for death and life; the four elements, according to this saying of the Scripture, 'the heavens declare the glory of God.'

8. The two thieves that were crucified with Christ have been represented from the very earliest days, and in the course of time some standing rules were observed with regard to them; they are smaller than Christ; they are fastened or bound to a cross of this **T** form; the penitent thief is placed on the right in the guise of an aged, penitent man; the impenitent one placed to the left, looks a much younger and rough criminal. Art called the latter *Gesmas*, the former *Dismas*.

The poetic spirit of Christianity placed around the Cross a large number of eloquent

### C.—Cross Symbols.

1. Sun and moon to the right and the left of the cross. This was done at first to symbolize an historical event, viz: that sun and moon were darkened, mourning the death of their Maker. This position, in flat contradiction to the natural one of these heavenly bodies, was not maintained without symbolic meaning. According to Saint Ambrose and Saint Gregory

a new creation (that of grace) took place on Golgotha, in which the dark North (in symbolism always the country of the Gentiles) would be lightened by the pure light of the Gospel, and the nation of patriarchs and prophets, that formerly sent its light over the world, would be seated in darkness.

Another explanation is as follows: The sun is Christ, the Light of the world; the moon is the Church, receiving her light from Him. At the cruel death of the Saviour both are darkened.

Or again, both represent Israël. The sun, pictured in dark tints, is the Jewish nation setting in black sorrow; 'the blood-red moon' represents the synagogue tinted with the cruelly shed blood of the Expected of the nations.

In the ninth century both sun and moon were personified by a man and a woman, covering their face with a cloak. Later on they are much more naively reduced to simple heads. (Sun and moon faces).

2. The skull is an allusion,

(a) To the Hebrew name Golgotha (Latin Calvarium) place of the skull, thus called on account of the Jewish tradition of that time, that the sepulchre of Adam was situated on that spot.

(b) To the spiritual death of mankind, caused

by sin, which was overcome by the bodily death of our Lord.

(c) To a poetical fiction taken from 'the golden legend,' according to which this skull should really have belonged to the first Adam, (the father of the human race) and in miraculous manner was brought up from the grave by the Blood of Christ (the second Adam, the Father of the children of God) dropping on it.

3. The serpent (sin) coiled at the foot of the cross or round a globe, is the figurative expression of God's curse on the evil one, who appeared to our first parents in the form of a serpent: 'Thou art cursed among all cattle and beasts of the earth; upon thy breast shalt thou go.'

The chalice or cup (already mentioned under A) is explained by but very few symbolists. According to them it reminds us of the legend that Joseph of Arimathea or Nicodemus should have caught up the Sacred Blood, that issued from the body of the Blessed Saviour when taken down from the Cross, in the same cup He had used at the Last Supper. This precious cup or chalice (the Holy Grail) became in mediæval literature the nucleus of a large round of Holy Grail legends. (It is a remarkable fact, that Tennyson in his beautiful idyll, 'The Holy Grail,' has overlooked this first

feature, which is obviously the essence of the conception.)

The devout commoners soon explained this cup as the 'cup of suffering,' which an Angel (called Chamæl in legendary lore) offered to the Saviour in the Garden of Gethsemane, to be emptied by Him on the cross, 'till the very last drop.' We too drink from it 'our eternal salvation,' because as an old inscription has it, it shall not be exhausted.

#### D.—Symbols and Attributes.

##### I. The Infant Christ

1. Is represented holding an apple, the fruit of paradise that became the cause of Adam's fall; an emblem therefore of sin, which Christ came to expiate.

With regard to the apple we find here one of the few instances in which the same symbol is used also in opposite sense. It means then 'the apple of obedience and of life,' which Christ, the second Adam, received from God His Heavenly Father, or is offered to Him by Mary (the second Eve).

A parchment or papyrus roll symbolizes the Old Testament; a book (the Gospels) the New Testament.

The globe symbolizes Him as the Ruler of the world. Frequently the globe is carried

## Various forms of the Cross.

FIG. 27.—The simplest form of cross, the plain, rectangular, Greek or rather eastern cross from which the others have been developed.



FIG. 36.—Ornamented, foliated, French-lily, or Gothic rosy-cross.



FIG. 28.—The Latin cross, with the upright of double length. (Crux immisa.)



FIG. 37.—Spanish cross.



FIG. 29.—St Anthony's, Egyptian or *tau* cross. (Crux commissa.)



FIG. 38.—Five-fold Cross of Jerusalem (the five sacred wounds).



FIG. 30.—St Andrews-Burgundian-Russian cross. Form of the cross on which St Andrew the Apostle was put to death at Patras. (Crux decussata).



FIG. 39.—Starry (or flamed cross).



FIG. 31.—St Peter's cross, because the Prince of the Apostles was crucified head-downwards.



FIG. 40.—Anchor-cross (hope).



FIG. 41.—Cross implanted in globe (empire).



FIG. 32.—St Philip's cross, the form of cross on which he suffered death for Christ's sake.



FIG. 42.—Cross implanted in a heart (love).



FIG. 33.—The double cross: patriarchal, cardinalitial, archiepiscopal, lotharingian form.



FIG. 43.—Mountain-Golgotha or Calvary Cross.



FIG. 34.—Papal cross (from 15th century).



FIG. 44.—Russian cable-cross.



FIG. 35.—Maltese or knightly cross.



FIG. 45.—Palm-cross; victory over sin and death.

in the left hand, whilst the right is lifted up in blessing, symbol of the divine graces.

2. Another attribute is a cross, on which the boy-Jesus is resting at full length ; sometimes also a cross that He is putting together in the workshop of Saint Joseph. In both cases it symbolizes the end for which He came.

3. Again another attribute consists of red roses scattered about by the Divine Infant, a prophetic symbol of the blood of the Martyrs shed all over the world.

## II.—CHRIST THE REDEEMER.

### A.—Symbols derived from the animal world

1. A fish (very often a dolphin) is the mystic symbol of the first Christians. It is a play on the letters of the Greek word  $\text{ix}\theta\epsilon\varsigma$ , meaning 'fish,' the five letters of which form the initials of five Greek names of Our Lord, viz: Jesus Christ, God's Son, Saviour. (See in the Epigraphy).



FIG. 46. Monogram of Chri-t.

With regard to this symbol and a few others we must remember, that the first Christians to guard the truths of religion against pagan mockery, expressed them only by secret signs and figures, and moreover, that symbolic expressions were quite in the spirit of the times.

2. The lamb, too, dates from the period of the catacombs; it is the symbol of Christ, 'the Lamb of God, that did not open its mouth before the shearers,' and of which St. John the Baptist gave witness: 'Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world.'



FIG. 47. - Pelican and Sacrificial Lamb: Symbols of the Redeemer.

With some change of attributes the Paschal Lamb represents the Saviour as Conqueror; then the breast bears a gaping wound, the blood pours in a chalice or on a hill, the source of the four rivers of Paradise, which running in four directions, symbolize the four Evangelists the proclaimers of the Lord's victory.

When the lamb standing on a hill is accompanied on either side by six sheep, it symbolizes Christ surrounded by the Twelve, 'sent like sheep in the midst of the wolves.'

3. The most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is symbolized by the Apocalyptic, 'Book with seven seals' on which the Sacrificial Lamb is resting. The Lamb usually carries a cross or a banner of victory, and is surrounded with the nimbus of Divinity, to distinguish



FIG. 48.—The Lamb of God with banner of victory.

it from other lambs symbolizing the Apostles, or as in the text of Saint John, the ordinary faithful.

The lamb placed near St. Agnes, St. John the Baptist, and St. Francis, has a more personal meaning.

4. The lion alludes to the text of the Apocalypse (V. 5): 'Behold the lion of the tribe of Juda, the root of David hath prevailed to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof.' In popular estimation the lion is the king of the desert (the world). In this kingly sense it is a symbol of Christ, in the same way as the eagle (the king of the air) and the dolphin (the king of the sea).

Again, the lion is frequently used as an emblem of strength and vigilance and as such is often found at the entrance to the Church or to the Sanctuary. He serves, moreover, in opposite sense, as an emblem of the devil, according to the well-known text: 'Thy enemy the devil goes round as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.'



FIG. 49.—Pelican opening its breast.

5. The pelican, the bird that in the old legends is said to open its breast to sprinkle its young ones with its blood, that therewith they may be brought back to life, when the



arch enemy (the devil or sin) has killed them. In that manner Christ by His cruel death restored life to humanity, when it had suffered spiritual death. It is therefore an emblem of the Passion of Christ, and sometimes we even find a pelican or its nest placed on the top of a cross.

Another version is that the pelican feeds its nestlings with its heart's blood. It is then a direct emblem of the Redeemer, who died for our sake. This symbol of cruel torture has been rather extensively, though very inaccurately, applied to the Unbloody Sacrifice of Holy Mass.

6. The fabled Phoenix bird, that as the legend tells us, after a life of 500 years is burnt to ashes in its nest, from which it rises again rejuvenated, is a symbol of the Lord's Resurrection, at least when depicted with nimbus and palm of victory.

7. The brazen serpent. As the Israelites, suffering from the venomous snake-bites, were cured by looking on the brazen serpent erected by Moses, so the Christian can be healed from the poison of sin by looking up to the Cross. And Saint John writes: 'Like Moses exalted the serpent in the desert, so the Son of Man shall be exalted.'

8. The Dove is rich in symbolic meanings. This emblem of love, and later on of innocence,

found its highest significance in the Saviour, especially in His Bloody and Unbloody Sacrifice, (death and Eucharist). This may have been the reason why in olden times the Holy Eucharist was reserved, enclosed in a golden vessel in the form of a dove. Sometimes the Christians called their church 'the house of our Dove,' and frequently the word 'dove' served to indicate the devout Christian soul.



FIG. 50.—The thirsting hart (the soul) drinking at the seven fountains (the holy sacraments).

9. The Stag or the Hart is in some pious legends represented as the enemy of the serpent (the

devil or sin) which it always overcomes and kills. As such it is an emblem of the Victor of sin.

It is also the well-known symbol of the soul's ardent desire for holy Communion: 'as the hart longeth for the living waters.'

The Unicorn is another mystic symbol, derived from a similar legendary source. It does not allow itself to be caught by any hunter, but surrenders itself peacefully in the lap of a Virgin.

#### B.—Symbols derived from Trees.

1. The Olive tree, a very complex symbol of the grace of Christ. The oil obtained from

its fruit was a universally known pain-stilling remedy, a restorer of vigour and suppleness, and as such highly esteemed by Roman and other champions. As endowed with those qualities olive oil is used with symbolic intent in Baptism and Confirmation, in Extreme Unction and many consecrations. Christ, the source of the graces conferred, is the Olive-tree.

In connection with this we must mention, that the Church does not only make use of olive oil by itself, but also of a mixture of that oil with balsam, called Chrysm. This symbolizes the two Natures of our Lord, the divine (balsam) and the human nature (olive oil).

The constantly replenished oil-cruet of the widow of Sarepta, and the altar-lamp always full of oil, symbolize the inexhaustibleness of the strengthening and soothing grace of Christ.

Lastly, the door of the Holy of Holies in Solomon's temple was made of olive-wood, and if we hark back to what has been said about the church-door symbolizing Christ as 'the gate of Heaven' we have here another instance of the symbolic meaning of the olive-wood.

2. The palm (branch or tree) was, already among the heathen, a common emblem of victory.

3. The balsam is a similar symbol with the same meaning of the alleviating, healing and fostering unction of the grace of our Lord.

4. Incense is the symbol of prayer ascending to heaven ; likewise of a sacrifice pleasing to God, especially the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in which Christ is offered an acceptable oblation to God and man.

5. The Vine. ' I am the Vine and My Father is the husbandman ' is a symbolic utterance of the Lord Himself. Likewise ' I am the Vine, you (the Apostles) are the branches. ' Hence the Vine with twelve grapes is a symbol of Christ.

Moreover, Our Lord was ' to tread the wine-press ' and ' to make the blood of the grape ' flow from that fruit ; two symbols of the Passion, which would make the sacred Blood flow from the Saviour's body.

Lastly wine, ' the blood of the grape ' is a figure of the Holy Eucharist, of the heavenly wine that produces Virgins. This leads us to the symbolism of

### III. The Eucharistic Christ,

or Christ in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar. There we meet with the following symbols :



FIG. 51.—Ears of corn and branch of the vine; symbols of the Blessed Sacrament.

the grape, the vine and the vine-leaf, as emblems of the Sacred Blood ; the wheat, and in more remote sense, the instruments of the passion, as emblems of the Sacred Body.

As mystic prototypes from the Old Testament we find in most churches, near the altar or on the Communion rails, representations of the Jewish Shew-bread; of the rock producing living water at the touch of Moses' rod; of the pure, bloodysacrifices of Abel and Abraham; of the unbloody sacrifice of bread and wine offered by Melchisedech, when Abraham and his servants (the just) returned victoriously from battle against the spoilers (sinners) of Lot and his family; of the Jewish Paschal lamb; of the rain of manna (the wondrous bread from heaven) in the desert of Sin (the world); of Christ with the two disciples at Emmaus; and above all, of the Last Supper. The explanation here is so obvious, that no further words are necessary.



Melchisedech rex Salem

FIG. 52. Melchisedech r x Salem.  
Melchisedech,  
priestly proto-  
type of Christ.

#### IV. Prototypes.

Prototypes of the Old Testament realized in the Person of Christ.

Sacrificers: Melchisedech; Abraham; Aaron.

Sacrifices: The innocent Abel; Isaac destined for sacrifice by his father Abraham; and Joseph sold by his brethren.

d



FIG. 53.—Prototypes of the Blessed Saviour. A painted ceiling of the third century. This fresco is one of the most remarkable reproductions of ancient Christian art, and was painted on the vaulted ceiling of the Catacomb of St Agnes. The entire picture is in the form of a cross. The central position included in an octagon represents 'the Good Shepherd'; the milk vessels symbolize the heavenly food given to us in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. In the surrounding square we find: (a) Adam and Eve, symbolizing the New Creation through Christ; (b) Moses striking the rock: the saving waters of the grace of Christ; (c) Jonah resting in the shadow of his tree: the Lord's Resurrection; (d) a female figure in the attitude of prayer (Orante): the Church of Christ. Ornamental birds symbolize Christian souls; flowers and fruit symbolize virtues and good works.

Qualities : Adam, founder of the human race ; Noah, builder of the ark ; the just man, Job in his tribulations ; the leader and lawgiver of the chosen people, Moses ; the strong one, Samson ; the praiser of God, David ; the man who wonderfully ascended to heaven, Elias ; the man who came unscathed from the lion's den, Daniel ; the man who remained three days in the belly of the whale, Jonah.

Things : the water-yielding rock of Moses ; the health-restoring brazen serpent ; the grains of manna. In conclusion : Our Lord called Himself 'the gate of heaven' ; and He directs 'the barque of Peter' (the Church). Intimately related to this last symbol is another, expressed in the words of Saint Paul 'that Christ is the anchor of our hope unto life eternal.'

### III.—THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

1. We have seen already that the Blessed Mother of Our Lord is symbolically commemorated in the church-edifice itself, viz: by the sacristy or vestry, 'the room or apartment,' the old symbolists say, from which the Sacrificer was to come; by the Lady-chapel, and by the two Church-towers, with symbolic allusion to the Litany of Loreto; 'tower of ivory' symbolizing her sweet love, and 'tower of David' her immovable strength.

2. All these were, however, but general symbols, much less acceptable to the popular mind than the direct historical representations, which ecclesiastical art in all ages has produced of Mary's glories. Faith and love were both inexhaustible and constantly found new modes of expressing their veneration for 'the Mother of the Lord.' We cannot consider all of them individually in our limited space, but we shall bring them back to main-groups, in so far at least as they possess symbolical importance.

3. As Mother of the Lord she carries the Divine Infant in her arms, as a visible token of her high and holy Maternity. The Divine



power of the Infant is usually symbolized by the globe He carries in His hand, or by the hand raised in benediction. With greatly changing variety the artists tried to give paramount expression, now to the Virginity, then again to the Divine Maternity of the Virgin-Mother.

4. The head of Mary is surrounded with a crown of stars. The words of the Apocalypse 'And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars, although directly glorifying the Church, may symbolically be referred to Mary. The 'sun' is in that case the grace of God; the 'moon' the Church of Christ, whose chosen queen she is, and the twelve stars are according to Saint Bernard, her emblem as the Queen of the Apostles. Others explain the twelve stars as symbolic of the twelve prophets who announced her prerogative of selection, and some even find them to represent the nine choirs of the Angels and the three classes of Saints: Martyrs, Confessors and Virgins; in a word, the whole heavenly court, thus symbolizing her dignity of Queen of Heaven.

5. In this quality she bears the golden sceptre of more than earthly power, because she is lifted far above the ever-changing transitoriness of all created things, as is expressed by the changing

moon at her feet, or by the terrestrial globe serving her for a footstool. Intimately related to this is her representation as 'the Queen of Peace,' seated on the rainbow 'the arch of reconciliation.'

6. Her dress, in the earliest as well as in later reproductions after the ancient style, is always a long, girthed, white vestment (*tunica*, *chiton*) partially covered with a blue cloak.

7. Her feet always covered, trample in the dust the black hellish serpent, generally holding in its mouth the apple of Eve, a symbolic reminder of the Lord's prophecy of the coming Redeemer: 'I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed; she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.'

8. As Queen of Heaven this Esther of the New Testament has the fullest right to wear the Royal diadem; but we find her moreover occasionally surrounded by a great disk or shield of light, called a *gloria*, an attribute not granted to any other of the saints. Strictly spoken is it an emblem exclusively belonging to the Divinity, but the artists often applied it to her, the Mother of the Lord, who in the words of Saint Bernard, is all-powerful by her intercession (*omnipotentia supplex*).

9. Mary the Mother of Him, who came to redeem us by His sacred passion and death,

was destined also to be 'the Mother of Sorrows,' the *Mater dolorosa*. Old Simeon had prophesied to her: 'and thine own soul a sword shall pierce,' and as such she is depicted with a sword piercing her heart.

10. This symbolism was later on further developed, and Mary represented as Our Lady of Seven Dolours, with seven swords piercing her heart. These seven dolours call to mind the seven severest trials of her life, viz.: the prophecy of her future trials; the flight into Egypt; the loss of the Divine Child; her meeting with Jesus carrying His Cross; her standing under the Cross on Calvary; supporting on her lap the dead body of her Divine Son; assisting at His being laid in the Sepulchre.



FIG. 54.—Our Lady of Seven Dolours.

These again gave rise to seven other representations forming a perfect contrast with the first, viz., 'the seven joys of our Lady, that are: The Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity of our Lord, the Adoration of the Magi, the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Descent of the Holy Ghost and the Assumption.

11. A special and very favourite manner of depicting our Lady or the Mother of Sorrows is the so-called 'Pieta,' our Lady sitting at the foot of the cross, with the lifeless body of

her Divine Son on her knees. Mysticism referring to the words of the Apocalypse, describing the glory of the throne of the Great King and of the Lamb, sees in the Pieta a special glorification of Mary as 'the Seat of Wisdom' carrying both the living and the dead Body of her Divine Son.

12. Almost as a contrast to the Pieta we find the Mäesta, (Majesty) in which the Blessed Virgin is seated on a throne in the full glory of her Divine Maternity, with the Divine Infant on her knees.

#### Various motives of art in representing the Blessed Virgin.

1. Each joy and each sorrow of the Blessed Virgin became by itself a motive, sometimes even a centre, for various reproductions of art recognized at once by the beholders on account of their thorough knowledge of their holy Mother's history. More than a hundred different representations have in that way witnessed to the devotion of Christian artists.

2. Besides those historic delineations, taken from Holy Scripture, we find also a number of symbolic ones, as for instance: the Queen of the holy Rosary; the Virgin most wise, reading the prophecies about the expected Redeemer; the Assumption, in which Mary is carried to heaven by Angels; and intimately

connected with this, her Coronation by her Divine Son ; the Queen of Angels, where she is surrounded by the heavenly choir singing her praises ; and lastly the very naive representations of 'the Dormitio' or the deathbed of the Blessed Virgin. We see her there laid out on her couch, the Apostles, often in priestly vestments, surrounding the inanimate body of their Queen. The Saviour too is present carrying most lovingly in His arms a little infant, symbolizing the soul of His mother, which He shall bear upward to heaven.

3. There her glorious heavenly power displays itself and the symbolic mind of the artists found a figurative expression for this in the 'Mother of Mercy' representing her as spreading the ample folds of her royal cloak over those confided to her care.

4. The colours themselves have their own symbolic meaning. In the coronation pictures she is dressed in most glorious garments, sometimes of the same material as those of her Divine Son. In those of the Annunciation she wears as 'the humble handmaid of the Lord' a simple red and blue. As Queen of Heaven she is clad in azure, often strewn with golden stars, or wears the royal cloak of purple or gold brocade. Rosy red represents the dawn preceding the rising of the Sun of Justice.

Green in draperies and under garment, especially in pictures of the Annunciation, speaks of the Expected of the Nations, and spotless white indicates the Virgin of Virgins.

5. It is here the place to say a few words about some representations of Our Lady, that are not left to the unfettered imagination of the artists, but that must be treated according to some standing conception. We enumerate three, one of which is almost certain to be found in our churches.

(a) In the first place we mention 'Mary as Queen of the Holy Rosary.' St Dominic is kneeling in front of Mary's throne and receives from her hand the string of Rosary beads. Sometimes we find the beads handed to him by Our Lord, which is less accurate. The whole scene is often garlanded with roses, white ones for the joyful mysteries, red ones for the sorrowful mysteries, and golden ones for the glorious mysteries.

(b) In the second place 'the Holy Heart of Mary.' This representation owes its origin to the ordinary popular desire for a contrast or pendant, which caused the Holy Heart of Mary to be depicted in imitation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; but it does not possess equal rights with the other, which finds its origin in a personal revelation of our Blessed Lord to the Blessed Margarite Mary Alacoque.

(c) Thirdly, the Immaculate Conception. A masterpiece, that may serve as a type of this representation, has not yet been created, and the more ancient artists are extremely divergent in this matter. The type exhibited by 'the miraculous medal' so much found in France, has not been approved by the Church ; it shows the Blessed Virgin standing with outspread hands, that shoot out rays, (of grace) with an aureole of nine stars, and trampling a serpent under foot.

In more recent years this motive has obtained a more stereotyped form in the pictures of our Lady of Lourdes. They represent the Blessed Virgin in the way she showed herself in many apparitions to Mary Bernadette Soubirous, in a white flowing dress, with light blue girdle, on the right arm a rosary with golden cross, the eyes lifted up to heaven, the hands crossed in prayer resting on her bosom, the feet standing on a half moon with the horns turned up.

It may here be pointed out as well, that except in pictures of the Immaculate Conception and of the Holy Heart of Mary, the Mother of our Lord should never be separated from Her Divine Son. According to a special decree of the Congregation of Rites (1875) she should carry the Divine Infant in her arms ; whilst it is more in keeping with the symbolic





‘Morning Star’ or the immovable ‘Fixed Star’ at the firmament (of creation).

2. The lily—the general symbol of purity—is pre-eminently the emblem of the Virgin of Virgins, who from all eternity was chosen to be and to remain the Virgin Mother of God.

3. The rose, in its colour the emblem of ‘love,’ in its form the emblem of ‘beauty,’ and when woven into a garland, the emblem of ‘prayer’ is specially sacred to Mary. In Holy Writ she is called ‘the rose of the root of Jesse’ (the father of David from whom she was descended), and ‘the rose without thorns’ (of sin or perishableness); and in sacred poetry she is called ‘the rose of Anna’s womb.’

4. She is the olive of hope and superabundant grace; the imperishable cypress pointing to Heaven, the deeply rooted cedar of the Libanon, unwavering in the storm (of sin or tribulation); the plane tree, offering grateful shelter to man by its shadows and sweetness.

### Prototypes

Persons: Eve; Mary, Moses’ sister, who saved the life of her brother when an infant the pure Judith, delivering her people from the hands of the Assyrians; Deborah and Jael,

'delivering Israel from the hands of Jabin, King of Asor ; Esther, the humble maiden elevated to be Queen of Persia.

Things : Paradise ; the saving ark of Noah ; the ladder of Jacob reaching up to heaven ; the bush of Moses, that burned without being consumed, because God was in it ; the fleece of Gideon, which alone was saturated with dew, whilst everything around remained dead and dry, a symbol of the special election of the Blessed Virgin above all the daughters of Israel. 'He shall descend as dew on a fleece,' prophesied the psalmist. The lily waxing unhurt in the midst of the thorns (sin). According to a very beautiful mediæval conception, she is the closed gate, the walled-in garden of the scriptures, defending entrance to everything of earth, but opened on high, to God alone. To her were applied the words



FIG. 56.—The 'enclosed garden' Mary the Virgin of Virgins.'

of the prophet Ezechiel : 'this gate shall remain closed because the Lōrd God of Israel has passed through it.' The Litany of Loreto is but one accumulation of symbols, and therefore we find Mary represented as : 'Mirror of Justice,' 'Seat of Wisdom,' spiritual, venerable, most excellent vessel of devotion,' 'strong tower of David,' 'beautiful tower of ivory,'

‘house of gold’ and ‘gate of heaven.’ And all this is the most perfect fulfilment, both by animate and inanimate nature, of her own prophetic word: ‘Behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.’

#### IV.—THE SAINTS.

1. WE shall now continue our delineation of iconographic principles with regard to the saints. Except in a very few cases, the idea of portraiture of the earthly personality of the saints, does not enter into the conception of their representation. In features and dress they are generally depicted in glorified form as 'citizens of heaven,' in the distinctive dress of their calling or dignity: a Pope with tiara and crosier, a knight in armour, a monk in his habit, etc.

2. Face and figure may differ in widely varying manner, but the introduction of definite and characteristic attributes belongs to the principal means of defining the precise personage. An Evangelist, *e.g.*, shows his roll or book of Gospels; a martyr, the instrument of his suffering; a volume symbolizes a Doctor of the Church, a founder of a religious order, or a learned person. Surrounding decorations: emblematic flowers, architectural figures, name-ciphers, etc., contribute also to recognition of the individual.

3. The pictures can be recognized in two

ways : by general and by personal attributes. The former we intend to explain more at length ; the latter are the object of the following remarks. Personal attributes may be divided into emblematic or symbolic ones, (for instance, a lily signifying innocent purity), and historical or biographical ones.

The historical attributes are of frequent occurrence ; they are derived from events, acts, or glorious moments, of the lives of the saints, and either belong to special characteristics, to the manner of life specially expressed by works of penance or of charity towards others, to heroic deeds or miraculous actions and wonderful visions ; to personal devotions, or sometimes even to prophetic indications, made known in a dream or vision.

4. They necessarily presuppose a knowledge of the biography and even of the legends of the saint, thus exhibited by the painter or sculptor. So when artists had to make a representation of Saint Lewis, king of France, they expressed his rank by crown, sceptre and royal cloak, but at the same time, they placed in his hand a crown of thorns, in commemoration of the fact, that he received our Lord's crown of thorns from the emperor Baldwin, brought



FIG. 37. St Lewis, carrying our Lord's Crown of Thorns.

it most devoutly over to France and built 'la Sainte Chapelle' in Paris to enshrine it.

Hence the high and general usefulness of an iconography for every Church, with its pictures and statues, in particular, at least if the highly desirable end is to be obtained, that the statues or paintings shall properly fulfil their office of instruction and devotion.

To give another instance. It is but natural that holy hermits should be depicted, before or near the hermitages or the mountain-caves in which they spent their lives, as is done, *e.g.* with Saint Felix of Nola. Yet, before his dwelling-cave a large spider's web is painted, in connection with the special event of his life, that God, by means of this, protected him against the enemies that sought his destruction; if this event is unknown to the beholder, it would be hard for him to find an explanation for such an attribute.

We now shall give an explanation of the general attributes common to certain groups or classes of saints.

#### General Attributes.

1. The most prominent distinctive mark of the heavenly Friends of God is the circle of golden light around their heads. According to the rule laid down by Pope Benedict XIV,

this light, in the form of a disk or round shield, otherwise called a nimbus, is the special mark of a saint, whilst the golden circle, called an aureole is the appropriate mark of the Blessed. This is bound up with the words, which Holy Writ puts in the mouth of the Saints, saying : 'Thou hast crowned us with Thy shield of honour,' by which they express, that they have become partakers of the light of glory and that they know themselves safe under the shield of God's protection.

A finer distinction regarding the colour of the aureole, though more observed by divines than by artists, assigns white to the Virgins, purple to the Martyrs, and green to the Doctors of the Church. In the '*hortus deliciarum*' written in the 12th century, we find the order or classification of the Saints, with regard to the colour of the nimbus, set down in this way : virgins, apostles, martyrs, confessors, and Christ Our Lord : gold ; prophets and patriarchs : silver ; married people : green ; penitents : yellow. Even the living wore sometimes the nimbus, a square one ; and the devil was represented with a black one. In most cases, however, the artists did not faithfully adhere to this distinction between Saints and Blessed ones ; only a few of the more conscientious workers observed it, as for instance, Fra Angelico. But there exists

another characteristic symbol, for which the artists have shown the highest regard ; as a special distinctive mark of the Blessed Trinity and above all of the Blessed Saviour, a cross was worked into the nimbus, and the so-called crossed-nimbus thus created, has always been held as an exclusive emblem of the Divinity.



FIG. 58.—Christ with crossed nimbus standing within a mandorla; the surrounding saints with nimbi; Moses with horns of light (Fra Angelico).

2. On various occasions we find the full figure of Christ placed in an oval-shaped disk of light (mandorla), by which the artist tried to give some sort of expression of 'the fulness of celestial glory.'

3. A similar symbolic meaning is inherent in the highly decorated background to the pictures of

Saints, in the baldachino erected over their statues, in the flowered carpet covering the floor under their feet. All these are symbolic of the beauty and perfection of 'the heavenly Paradise.'

4. Before we proceed to describe the various groups or classes of Saints with their special attributes, we must notice a few others, that



are frequently used for the delineation of some general characteristic; a book: the Holy Gospels, often opposite to a parchment roll: the Old Testament; a beehive: eloquence, according to the Book of Proverbs; a skull: continual meditation of the vanity of things of earth; a dove over the head or at the ear: heavenly inspiration; a scourge or discipline: severe penance; a chalice: priestly rank or office; a church: the building of churches or protection of Holy Church; imperial globe: the world; a crown: princely dignity, either terrestrial or celestial (if a Saint); olive-branch: peace; palm branch: victory of Christians (especially of Martyrs) after bodily death; sceptre, globe, cloak, sword: exercise of power; key: power of forgiving sins; sun and moon: spiritual and temporal power, Pope and Emperor. Finally, wounds in hands and feet symbolize stigmatization (impression of the five Holy Wounds) as in Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint Catherine of Siena and others. With regard to Martyrs, the instruments of



FIG. 59. — St Vincent with nimbus and dove at the ear.



St. Willibrordus.

FIG. 60. — St Willibrord, with nimbus, mitre, and church.

their suffering are their proper characterizing attributes.

Classes or groups of Saints.—Iconography has simply followed the road taken by the Church. Just as she has classified the citizens of heaven according to their dignity or calling,—of Angels, of Apostles and Evangelists; of Martyrs; of Confessors, with or without ecclesiastical rank or dignity, princes, doctors, founders, hermits; of Virgins and Widows—so we shall find, that iconography has accepted standard-forms to express those various classes.

### The Angels.

They serve before the throne of God, and are in a most special way God's messengers.

1. In that quality they are represented as well-made young men, barefooted, clad in a long tunic. They wear a priest's stole or archiepiscopal pallium; a girdle, symbolizing rapidity of motion and ready obedience, upholds their garment. This is usually some white, silky fabric, sometimes of another colour more in symbolic harmony with the virtue more prominently intended to be expressed. The wings at the shoulders and the pilgrim's staff symbolize their absolute readiness, instantly to fulfil the orders of God.

2. In relation to the various offices ascribed

to them, they may carry a thurible, symbolizing adoration, musical instruments, symbolizing hymns of praise; a lily as emblem of purity, or a palm-branch as emblem of victory. The two last-named attributes bear reference, in most cases, to the persons they visit or conduct. They also carry the flaming sword, emblem of 'God's wrath'; the trumpet, 'the voice of God calling to judgment'; a sceptre, 'God's supreme rule.'

3. Of the many 'legions of Angels' only three are known to us by name, through Revelation; they are the Archangels: Michaël (Who is like to God?), Raphael (the healing of God,) Gabriel (the power of God.)

Michaël is the Prince of Angels, the leader of the army of the Lord, the powerful protector of the Church, the Separator of the good from the bad on the last day of Judgment; attributes: flaming sword and scales.

Raphael, the guardian angel of mankind, the guide and conductor of the young Tobias; represented as a pilgrim with staff and water-bottle; sometimes also with a fish, in commemoration of the miraculous cure of old Tobias.

Gabriel, the messenger of Divine Revelation. Attributes: sceptre and lily; usually represented as bringing the glad tidings to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

According to a poetical legend, founded on Jewish traditions, these three angels with another, Uriel (Light of God) are the four bearers of the throne of the Divine Omnipotence. The latter is, moreover, called the protector of the Lord's Sepulchre and the guide of the disciples of Emmaus.

4. After the old Byzantine conception, Michaël represents the Supreme power, Gabriel the royal dignity and Raphael the High Priesthood of the Divinity; three ideas, that have inspired the artistic execution of many poetic representations.

Finally, many legendary traditions mention that Chamael strengthened Christ our Lord in the garden of Gethsemane (attribute: cup and staff); that Jophiel drove Adam and Eve from Paradise, (attribute: flaming sword); that Zadkiel stayed Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac (attribute: sacrificial knife); and that Japhkiel was the guide of the Jews in the desert.

#### 5. The Nine Choirs of Angels.

The Angels are divided in three orders or hierarchies, each of three divisions or choirs. The few ecclesiastical data we possess about them, have been largely added to by sacred art.

I. The highest order, the most closely related to God consists of:

‘Seraphim’ or ‘fire-spirits’ only fire and love. In accordance with the description given in the Old Testament, they are represented with six wings, and with flames of fire: they bear a shield on which is engraved; ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord the God of hosts.’ Their leader is Uriel.

‘Cherubim’ the ‘many-eyed,’ signifying according to Saint Athanasius, ‘the fulness of knowledge.’ They are often depicted with many-eyed peacocks’-feathers. Their leader is Jophiel.

‘Thrones,’ the throne-bearers of the Divinity, signifying Majesty and Justice. They are represented as wheels of fire; their leader is Japhkiel.



FIG. 61.—The choirs of the angels. In the centre St Michael, Protector of the Church.

II. The high priestly-princes of heaven, the rulers. They all wear long albs, golden

girdles, greenish-golden stolas, crown and sceptre on which is impressed the "Seal of God": IC.XC = Jesus Christ. (See in Epigraphy).

'Dominations.' They carry sceptre and sword. They signify the power of God over the world. Their leader is Zadkiel.

'Virtues' signifying the Passion of our Lord. As attributes they carry the instruments of the Passion. Their leader is Haniel.

'Powers.' The protectors of mankind. Attribute: a flaming sword. Their leader is Raphael.

### III. The Ministering Angels:

'Principalities.' They are the protectors of princes. Their attributes are: sword, sceptre and cross. Their leader is Chamael.

'Archangels,' the seven that stand before the throne of God; the leaders of the seven orders already enumerated. Their leader is Michael, the Prince of the heavenly hosts.

'The Angels,' with the attributes already mentioned before.

### The Apostles.

They appear in art as powerful men and barefoot, often as 'good shepherds' they carry a lamb on their shoulders. In the hand they hold a book of the Gospels; this is opened in case of the once doubting Thomas, and

shut in all other cases, but in a few rare instances we behold just the reverse. They carry moreover the instrument of their martyrdom, except Saint John. Occasionally they show a strip of parchment, on which is written one of the twelve articles of the Creed that they conjointly drew up.

As pendants we often find the twelve minor prophets.

The holy Evangelists show as a common attribute a quill and an open book. To this is added, for each of them, a personal attribute, derived from the opening sentences of their Gospel.



FIG. 62.—Attribute of St Matthew.

St Matthew, a winged human figure (the human descent of Our Lord). St Mark, a lion, because he begins his



FIG. 63. Attribute of St John.

Gospel with John the Baptist, 'the voice of one calling in the desert'; and also, because the



FIG. 64.—Attribute of S: Mark.

royal greatness of Christ's character is the prominent trait of his Gospel.



FIG. 65. Attribute of St Luke.

St Luke, with a sacrificial bull (less correct a bull's head) because his Gospel begins with the narrative of Zachary's sacrifice; also.

because he tells us in full particulars all about the sacrificial death of Our Lord.

Saint John has an eagle, because at the very beginning of his Gospel, he soars on eagle's wings up to the very throne of the Divinity.

In ancient times these four symbols were united into one form with four heads, called a 'tetramorf,' the mystical meaning of which is obvious, viz.: the perfect unity of the four different gospels.

According to many of the Fathers, those four attributes symbolize also the chief elements of our Lords' life on earth: the Incarnation (human figure); the Death on the Cross (Sacrificial bull); the Resurrection (lion); the Ascension (eagle).

### Martyrs.

The iconography of the Martyrs is the most important, with regard to the richness and the variety shown in the representation of the countless witnesses of our Holy Faith, but the fundamental principle is the most simple. The martyrs are clad in the garment proper to their station in life and show the instrument of their suffering and death.

In a former chapter we have made mention of St John Nepomuc, often represented on the confessional, he being the patron of the seal



of Confession. When this Saint refused to obey the command of the Bohemian King Wenceslaus IV, to reveal what was confided to him under seal of confession, heavy stones were hung round his neck and he was drowned in the river Moldau at Prague. Hence the stone, which is added to his picture as a personal attribute; the finger on the lips, is the general and well-known symbol of irrefragable silence. The holy martyrs moreover carry the martyrs' palm, this being according to St Gregory, the emblem of victory for the witnesses to the blood of the faith in Christ Jesus.



FIG. 66 —St John  
Nepomucene.  
Martyr of the  
seal of confes-  
sion.

### The Confessors

Are the heavenly friends of God, who have borne glorious witness to the truth of Divine Revelation, not by a cruel death, but by the words and actions of their saintly lives.

As we have said already, the emblems of their dignity, the symbols of their high virtue, their special characteristics or special events of their life, are made use of as personal attributes.

For instance: St Joseph, the Fosterfather of Our Lord, is represented as the Guardian of the Holy Family, and as such he leads the

Divine Infant by the hand. He carries a white lily, (vow of purity) that sprouts out of his pilgrim staff: an allusion to the narrative of the Golden Legend, in which it is said, that the—miraculous blossoming of that staff was looked upon as the heavenly-sent token of his being elected as the Bridegroom of the Blessed Virgin Mary. When represented as carpenter, he is shown with his tools and his workshop, the most fit symbols of his trade. As 'protector of the Church, he carries the Barque of Peter, usually painted on a shield; or he tramples under foot a dragon of hell (arch-enemy of the Church).

Various classes of Saints belong to this group. In the first place:



FIG. 67. —St Gregory: papal cross, tiara, dove.

The Popes, dressed in white as Representatives of Christ, the Lamb without spot. Since the fourteenth century (Pope Benedict XII) the head is covered with the tiara, which in the strictest sense symbolizes the temporal power, although it is held also as an emblem of the triple papal power, the power of order, the power of spiritual jurisdiction and the power of temporal jurisdiction; or again as emblem of the triple dignity of Teacher, Lawgiver

and Judge. Another covering for the head is the mitre, symbolizing the Pope as bearer of the highest spiritual power.

The hand holds the Papal-staff (ferula) which, though not found in the liturgy, is usually represented as a triple cross, probably an artistic conception in imitation of the tiara. The golden ring is a very distinctive attribute. It is, just as the Bishop's ring, the emblem of fidelity to the 'Spouse of Christ,' Holy Church. The stone which is set in this ring, is engraved with the Barque of Peter, the Fisherman, in commemoration of St Peter the first representative of Christ, whose lawful successor the Pope is. Hence this ring is named: 'the ring of the Fisherman.'

The Cardinals, in red (or purple) garment, as a sign of their readiness to defend the Church even at the sacrifice of their life, which is likewise inferred by the colour of the biretta and cardinal's-hat. The latter is a soft round hat with dependant tresses of fifteen tassels each.

The Bishops with a white mitre, bishop's-crook, golden ring and cross. The mitre is a head-covering with pointed front and back, a token of dignity, explained as an allusion to the horns of lights shining on the head of Moses, a reflection of the Majesty of God. It is also a symbol of the two Testaments, of which the Bishop is the keeper. The staff, like the royal

sceptre, is the emblem of the guiding power. The other attributes have been explained before.

Princes, with sceptre and crown; not unfrequently with a banner, symbolizing zealous propagation of the faith; sometimes carrying a church on the hand, symbolizing the foundation or decoration of churches.

Doctors of the Church with bookrolls, or books, a quill and a terrestrial globe, symbolizing the extent to which their doctrine has spread. The Greek and Latin Churches have four great Doctors each. The former are: St Basil, St Athanasius, St Gregory of Nazianzen, and St John Chrysostom. The latter: St Augustine, St Ambrose, St Jerome and St Gregory the Great.

Founders of Orders. They are clad in the specific dress of their Order. They carry the book of their rules and are characterized by their



FIG. 68.—St Dominic with nimbus, star, lily and book.

personal individual virtues or by some extraordinary fact of their life's history, as for instance, St Francis of Assisi, by the five Wounds of Our Lord, or Saint Dominic, by a star on his forehead and a lily. This star of Saint Dominic and the dog with a burning torch in its mouth, are a reminiscence of the wonderful dream of the saint's mother,

the blessed Jane of Ara. The symbolic interpretation is : that the light of love and knowledge would be kindled by the saint, who was to be a true guardian of the flock of Christ.

Hermits are represented as bearded men clad in a monk's habit or in animal-skins. They are in the neighbourhood of their hermitage or mountain cave, near which is seen a spring or other water-source. Often they are accompanied by some animal, as for instance Saint Antony, who is accompanied by a pig, symbol of the impure temptations overcome by him.

Virgins. The holy virtue of Virginity is from most ancient times represented for both sexes by the lily. Female Virgins frequently carry 'the burning lamp' of the Wise Virgins, as portrayed in the Parable of our Lord, or they wear a golden Bridal-crown, sometimes a garland of white flowers, because they belong to the Divine Spouse of their souls. Their garment is a long white dress with wide folds ; the hair hangs down over their shoulders.

Widows and penitents have no specific emblems. As attributes we find some remarkable event of their life, or some special favour that was granted them. St Anne, for instance, teaches her privileged daughter, the Blessed Virgin, the prophecies concerning the Messiah from a book-roll. Mary Magdalene holds a box of ointment ; St Elizabeth of Hungary

carries in her lap the flowers, into which the bread was changed that she wanted to conceal from her husband.



FIG. 69.—St Anne  
teaching the Bl.  
V. Mary.

Both Virgins and Widows may at the same time be Martyrs, and as such they show the tokens and instruments of their

martyrdom.

## V.—SYMBOLIC THINGS

### *Animate and inanimate.*

Hitherto we have only considered the iconography of the representations of persons, but besides these, various classes or groups of things exist, to which a great variety of frequently highly poetical and figurative meanings is attached. We mean by this the symbolisms of colours, flowers, animals and numbers. They were to be found in churches as well as in dwellings, in the interior of the house as well as in the market-place. Wherever decoration or ornament was applied on the altar, in statues, in carpets, chancels, windows, choir seats, helmets, gravestones, clocks, on walls and in porches, they appeared everywhere. They were read about in countless legends, in the lives of the saints and in animal fables; they were constantly alluded to in the pulpit, they abounded in ordinary popular conversation. In the section now following, we have tried to arrange them in such a manner, that the reader may at least become acquainted with the more important ideas they convey.

## Symbolism of colours.

1. An absolutely certain symbolic colour-gamut cannot be claimed to exist in the various products of art. The meaning of the different colours varied frequently with the idea they were meant to express.

2. We can therefore only enumerate the ideas that occur with greater regularity than any others. White, betokens faith, innocence, joy or mercy. Blue, indicates heavenly contemplation. Red, proclaims love, suffering, strength, justice. Crystalline, conveys the idea of spotless purity and of lucidity. Green, tells of hope, or imperishable youth, or the life of contemplation. Gold, stands for heavenly glory. Yellow, means the trial of suffering, also envy. Brown or grey, is the colour of humility. Violet, expresses silence or meditation. Black, is the hue of sorrow, death or peace. Purple, is the token of royal or episcopal dignity.

3. As an instance of a personal, not generally accepted, colour symbolism, we may cite the painting of Roger van der Weyden representing the seven sacraments, in which the angels belonging to the different sacraments are pencilled in the following colours: The angel of baptism, white (purification); of confirmation, yellow with red (light and joy); of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, green (hope); of



penance, fiery red (expiation); of Extreme Unction, black (sorrow); of orders, violet (spiritual dignity); of marriage, blue (faith and fidelity).

### Symbolism of flowers, trees, and fruits.

1. The most ancient poetic application of flowers to man and his various qualities, has been christened by the Church. The Christian artist found there above all allusions to heavenly persons or virtues. Nearly every saint of the calendar had a flower specially dedicated to him, and even at present, many flowers bear an emblematic or religious or holy name. This need not astonish us, because the mediæval monks were the great cultivators of trees and shrubs and flowers of those days.

2. The most beautiful flower of the Church is holy purity, is Christ Himself, the flower of Nazareth, the flower of flowers. All who wish to bear Him in their heart, must deck out their souls with 'the flowers of the virtues,' the principal ones being according to symbolism: purity, patience, humility, mercy, meekness and peacefulness. But they only flourish in the sunny summer (of God's grace) and die off in the biting cold of winter (sin).

3. For the most part this flower symbolism was derived from the Holy Scriptures, where

they are considered in twofold manner, either as examples of beauty and emblems of love, as in the *Canticle of Canticles*; or as rapidly passing away, as in the *Book of Job*.

4. The mediæval mystics enlarged this symbolism in all directions, especially Henry Suso, and it was even extended to trees, plants, and fruits. Its essential principle is the symbolism of colours. White is here again symbolic of purity; red of martyrdom; blue of humility; green of hope and life eternal. We shall enter now into particulars and indicate the principal symbols of different periods.

5. Flowers: The lily, innocence and purity; the rose, love, beauty, joy, silence or martyrdom; the pansy, humility.

Those three, the most universally known, are in a narrower sense the flowers of Our Lady. 'O Mary' exclaims St Bernard, 'thou art the violet of humility, the lily of purity, the rose of love.' According to St Ambrose, the violets are symbols of the Confessors; the lilies of the Virgins; the roses, of the Martyrs.

Further: the crocus symbolizes joy; the passion flower, suffering; the snowdrop, confidence; the hyacinth, power, peace; the tulip, prayer; the dahlia, splendour; the anemone,

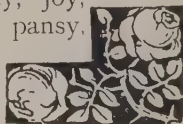


FIG. 70. -The rose: love.

carefulness ; the sunflower, longing for God ; five red roses on a rose bush, the five sacred wounds ; the everlasting flower, immor-



FIG. 71.—The passion-flower : suffering.

tality ; the myrtle, the state of virginity ; the honeysuckle or the rose of Jericho, the Blessed Virgin Mary ; maythorn, hope ; the balsamine, hastiness ; the buttercup, celibacy ; the camelia, beauty ; the sweet briar, salutary effort ; the heliotrope, devotion ; the hortensia, instability ; the jessamine, friendship ; the narcissus, selfishness ; the lotus, eloquence ; the water-lily charity ; the daisy, youth ; the peony, shame ; the mignonette, modesty ; the rosemary, reminiscence ; the marigold, jealousy.

6. Trees. Taking the legends as our guide, we gather the following symbolisms :

A green tree, eternal life ; a dry tree, perdition ; the tree of life, tree of Jesse, the family tree of Christ, the Cross ; accacia, friendship ; yew tree, pine, immortality ; walnut tree, prayer ; apple tree, original sin ; fig tree, fidelity ; palm, victory ; cedar, purity and steadfastness ; cypress, immortality ; oak, strength and also shame (acorns, food for swine) ; olive, mercy ; olive branch, peace ; plane tree, purity ; turpentine tree, peace ; vine and branches, Christ and christians, the Sacred Blood, the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, etc.

7. Fruits, plants, leaves. Pumpkin, self-conceit; almond, vigilance; myrrh, purity, mortification; aloes, mortification, incorruptibility; incense, prayer; balsam, consolation; pomegranate, unity of the Church; mulberry, meekness; Sodom's apple, sin, sinful lust; oak leaf, laurel, victory; wheat, ears of corn, the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar; wheat and cockles, Christians and infidels, good and bad; hyssop, faith, humility, purification; grain of seed, the Church; grass, hay, transitoriness; weed, sin; nettle, cruelty; madder, slander; hops, laziness; thistle, earthly wants, malice; ivy and periwinkle, fidelity; moss, charity; acanthus, mildness; wolf's bane, melancholy; belladonna and peach, silence; camomile, energy; mushroom, suspicion; wild chervil, faithlessness; holly, penance; iris, frivolousness; date, longanimity; reed, docility; sage, sadness; elder, zeal; azalea, sobriety; poppy, sleepiness; geranium, friendship; nut, patience; cocoa, goodness; cedar fruit, purity.

### Symbolism of Animals.

1. The symbolism by which animal qualities are predicated of the human character, and vice-versa, is of very ancient date. Christian art has adopted it in its representations, animal fables, songs, caricatures, etc., though deriving

its figurative application by preference from the rich store laid up in Holy Scripture. In those sacred writings we find the difference between clean and unclean animals constantly and very emphatically accentuated, and hence it becomes most obvious, that the clean animals in general should symbolize virtues, and the unclean ones vices. This tendency towards figurative expression supplies us moreover with the reason, why the pagan fiction concerning Orpheus, was in a higher sense considered as fulfilled in Christ; because in the same way as Orpheus gathered round himself the animals of the wilderness and tamed them by his music, so Christ our Lord overcame the lawless, murdering pack of sin and evil passions.

2. It is impossible always to attach a constant meaning to those symbols, as it happens but too frequently, that personal or accidental circumstances guided the choice of the artists. So we find, for instance, more than ninety animal symbols applied to the Saviour, the great majority of which have never been able to obtain a permanent iconographic footing.

3. As a rule we see the carnivorous animals being used as emblems or symbols of the powers hostile to the Christians; whilst inoffensive animals represent the Christian multitude, that suffers the attack. This may

serve as a general explanation of the various scenes of animal strife so frequently depicted. Paganism itself is constantly represented in animal form, frequently as a many-headed monster.

4. The various symbols distributed over many parables, songs, descriptions and epic poems, had slowly obtained universal recognition, but they did not always belong to the popular ideas of the same period; the same remark holds good for the symbolism of flowers and numbers. The following selection comprises the principal and most generally adopted symbolisms :

(a) Virtues. The lion, guardian, supporter, strength, courage, manliness, empire, Christ, (and in opposite meaning the devil) ; the lamb, Christ and the Christians ; the sheep, apostle ; lioness with cubs, phoenix, birds in a tree, hen with chickens, love, especially parental love ; dove, the Holy Ghost, simplicity ; dove, unicorn, purity ; swallow, innocence ; lark, singing praises ; nightingale, nightly prayer ; parrot, lamb, patience ; fish, Christ, sobriety ; hart or deer, dignity, soul longing for salvation ; cock, vigilance, prayer, admonition to do penance ; peacock, immortality, omniscience ; camel, longanimity, sobriety ; the hare, contrition, flight ; eagle, elevation, resurrection ; bee and ant, industry, piety towards the dead ;

elephant and crane, meekness, vigilance; hind, goodness, the Church; bull, strength; goat, mildness; deer, swiftness; dog, fidelity; stork, elevation; swan, solitude; falcon, nobility; rhinoceros, strength, just anger; snake, prudence.

(b) Vices. Bear, hyena, cock, impurity; horse, pride, (boldness, striving heavenwards); wolf, greed; wild boar, hedgehog, anger; fox, cunning, gluttony;ameleon, hypocrisy; magpie, goose, avarice, loquacity; owl, darkness, sin; ass, self-will, (patience); cat, coquetry; snail, sloth, (prudence); ostrich, hypocrisy; he-goat, sin; frog, pride; jackdaw, indiscretion; kite, jealousy; horse-fly, destruction; fly, magpie, slander, detraction; viper, spirit of evil; snake, the devil; scorpion, hatred; swine, lust, impurity; weasel, fear; swan, death; raven, hawk, vulture, theft. Fabulous animals: centaur, wild passion; siren, mermaid, seduction, the devil; spitting basilisk, blasphemy, jealousy; poisonous dragon, viper, raven, lobster, chimæra, griffin, the devil, sin; many-headed hydra, heresy.

### Symbolism of Numbers.

1. The ancient and mediæval Christian symbolists often made use of an accidental equality in numbers of sometimes widely

dissimilar persons, things or facts, to establish comparisons and connections, founded on nothing else but the external agreement in number. They looked in all directions for these uniform mutual relations, not only in the Old Testament, but in nature, in the moral order of things, in ecclesiastical dogmas and theological divisions, in a word, wherever any such coincidental parity in numbers might be found.

In this way, it did not last long before the symbolism of numbers had grown into a rich abundance of countless applications.

2. We shall only enumerate the principal ones :

One. The Divinity.

Two.—The two Natures of Christ, human and Divine ; the two Testaments ; all sorts of contrasts as : spiritual and temporal ; heaven and hell, etc.

Three.—The Blessed Trinity,  $\Delta$  ; the three theological virtues, faith, hope and charity ; the monastic vows : poverty, chastity, obedience ; future life : heaven, hell, purgatory ; the Church : suffering, militant, triumphant the three functions of the Church : Teacher, Sacrificer and Guardian ; and further a large number of triple distinctions and divisions already mentioned.

Four.—The cardinal points ; the elements ;



the times of the year and the day ; the material world [□], the cardinal virtues : prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance ; the greater prophets ; the Evangelists ; the Doctors of the Eastern and of the Western Church ; the streams or rivers of Paradise ; the four last things : death, judgment, hell and heaven ; the sins crying to heaven for vengeance : wilful murder, the sin of Sodom, oppression of the poor, defrauding labourers of their wages.

Five.—The books of Moses ; the outward and inward senses ; the wise and the foolish Virgins ; the Sacred Wounds of Our Lord.

Six.—The days of creation ; the world-periods (according to this old division : Adam = the infancy, Noah = the boyhood, Abraham = the early youth, David = the ripe youth, Jeremiah = the manhood, Christ = the old age of the world) ; the sins against the Holy Ghost : presumption, despair, resisting the known truth, envy of another's spiritual good, obstinacy in sin, final impenitence.

Seven.—The days of the week ; the Sacraments ; the Gifts of the Holy Ghost : Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, the Fear of the Lord ; the petitions of the 'Our Father' ; the works of mercy : (a) the Corporal ones : to feed the

hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to harbour the harbourless, to visit the sick, to visit the imprisoned, to bury the dead; and (b) the spiritual ones: to convert the sinner, to instruct the ignorant, to counsel the doubtful, to comfort the sorrowful, to bear wrongs patiently, to forgive injuries, to pray for the living and the dead; Holy orders: the four lower ones: Doorkeeper, Lector, Exorcist, Acolyte; and the three higher ones: Sub-deacon, Deacon, Priest; the principal virtues, viz: the three theological and the four cardinal ones; the Capital sins: pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, sloth; their contrasting virtues: humility, liberality, charity, meekness, temperance, brotherly love, diligence; the words of Our Lord on the Cross: 'Father, forgive them for they know not what they do'—'Amen I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise'—'Woman behold thy Son'—'Son, behold thy Mother'—'My God, My God! why hast Thou forsaken me'—'I thirst'—'It is consummated'—'Father, into Thy hands I commend my Spirit'—; the Sorrows of Mary; the Joys of Mary; the canonical hours (of the breviary): Matins and Lauds, Prime, Tierce, Sext, None, Vespers, Compline; the Liberal Arts: Grammar, Logic, Rhetoric, Music, Arithmetic, Geometry, Astronomy;—and several other septenaries,

many of which are made up of the addition three plus four.

Eight.—The pains of hell : the worm that never dies, utter darkness, flagellation, cold, heat, horror, shame, torture ; the people in Noah's ark ; the Beatitudes : the poor in spirit, the meek, the mourners, those that hunger and thirst after justice, the merciful, the clean of heart, the peacemakers, those that suffer persecution for justice' sake. Some Fathers of the Church, as for instance St Augustine, declare it the emblem of perfection ; for if seven be the number of the old creation, then eight is that of the new Creation through Christ.

Nine.—The choirs of angels ; the various ways in which we may either cause or share the guilt of another's sin : by counsel, command, consent, provocation, praise or flattery, concealment, being partner in the sin, silence, defending the ill done.

Ten.—The plagues of Egypt ; the great persecutions ; the commandments. It was held as the symbol of order, and consequently the number that exceeds it,

Eleven,—is the symbol of sin, of everything contrary to rule and order.

Twelve.—The months ; the sons of Jacob ; the tribes of Israel ; the Minor prophets ; the Apostles ; the fruits of the Holy Ghost :

Charity, Joy, Peace, Patience, Benignity, Goodness, Longanimity, Mildness, Faith, Modesty, Continency, Chastity.

### Symbolic Signs.

We often find in our churches, on pictures, under statues, on the walls and in various other places, certain symbolic signs, either carved or painted, that frequently demand some explanation. Those signs may be arranged under different headings, as: Name-ciphers (Monograms) Initials and Abbreviations (of words and sentences, the latter being represented by a few initials technically called 'sigla,' in itself an abbreviation of 'singulæ litteræ,' a few letters). As these signs refer to the Blessed Saviour and to the Sacred persons and things, it is important for us Catholics to know their meaning and their origin. The science that deals with their explanation, is called Epigraphy. A few words will sufficiently explain their origin. The first Christians carefully veiled their sacred mysteries and religious doctrines from the eyes of the pagans, both out of respect for the Divine Master and from fear of desecration and danger. Whenever they had to make mention of these things in public, they did it by signs and tokens, only known to the initiated. These were later on handed

down and kept in use, and now still deserve our attention. We shall speak first of the name-ciphers of Our Blessed Lord or the

1. Christ-monograms, which are nothing else but the initials of the names of Our Lord in Greek, often connected with a +.

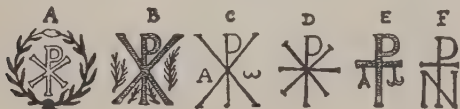


FIG. 72.—Christ-Monograms.

signifies : Christ. It consists of the first two letters x (chi) and p (rho) of the Greek word ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ (Christos, Christ) united in one sign, often called a Chi-rho, as shown in A. B. and C., where the letters are surrounded or flanked by palms of victory, or with the addition of  $\alpha$  and  $\omega$ . The same meaning is expressed by XPC. By adding a Greek or Byzantine cross a new form, D, was obtained, which again gave rise to the name-cipher of Christ the Crucified (Crux monogrammatica) see E, to which often the  $\alpha$  and  $\omega$  were added. The form under F, has a similar sense, slightly changed through addition of N. (NIKA) : therefore : 'Christ the Victor.'

2. IH signifies Jesus. They are the initial letters of the Greek ΙΗΣΟΥΣ, Jesus.

3.  $\alpha$  and  $\omega$ , or  $\alpha$  and  $\omega$ , signify God. They are the first and the last letters of the Greek

alphabet, or 'the beginning and the end' according to the Apocalypse, where it is said : 'I am the alpha, ( $\alpha$ ) and the omega, ( $\omega$ ) the beginning and the end, says the Lord God ;' for this reason, they are used as the symbol of creation and its incomprehensible qualities. (See fig. 12).

4. I.H.S. (like I.H.C. or I.C.) signifies, according to the best authorities, nothing else but : Jesus ; it being only an incorrect rendering of the first three letters of the Holy Name in Greek. This was followed by another faulty interpretation, which in course of time has gained permanency. People lost sight of the fact that H was a Greek letter, and took it to be a Roman letter of the same form, but with a quite different power, and so the Greek  $\eta\tau\alpha$  became the Latin H. In this way I.H.S. became a Latin monogram with a variety of meanings as : 'Jesu Humilis Societas,' the humble society of Jesus ; 'Jesus Hominum Salvator,' Jesus the Saviour of mankind ; 'In Hoc Signo (vinces),' in this sign (of the Cross) thou shalt conquer, a reminiscence of the well-known apparition vouchsafed to Constantine ; and several others of slight importance.

5. This cipher I.H.S. came in general use in the fifteenth century, after an apparition granted to St Bernardine of Siena (1444) ; it is the attribute of St Ignatius the Martyr, in

whose heart the Holy Name stood written, and also of St Vincent Ferrer (1419), and lastly it is the well-known cipher of the Jesuit order, and always means: Jesus Christ.

## II

1. The Blessed Trinity is not symbolized by letters but by an equilateral triangle;  $\Delta$ , which is sometimes surrounded by circle-segments. In the centre we often find the word: Jehovah, in Hebrew characters; on the sides: Pater, Filius, Spiritus Sanctus: Father, Son, Holy Ghost: 'because there are Three that give witness in Heaven: the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost, and those Three are One.' (See fig. 24).

2 This same fundamental truth of religion may be symbolized in other ways: viz: by a triangle with a three-leaved clover on one stem, or by the 'All-seeing eye of God' (omniscience) or by a triangle in a circle of light (infinity and glory). If the latter be moreover surrounded by clouds, the representation is meant to express more in particular the 'hidden mystery' of this article of our faith.

3. The general symbol of the Divinity is the sign of a cross (redemption) within a circle, (eternity and perfection); hence it is, that this attribute, exclusively pointing to the Divinity, is used as the nimbus, appropriate

to each of the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity.

4 We have already stated that a fish represented the figure of Christ; but sometimes the word itself was written: ΙΧΘΥΣ. The five letters are the initials of the five Greek words meaning: Jesus, Christ, God's Son, Saviour,

ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΘΕΟΥ ΥΙΟΣ ΣΩΤΗΡ.

5 In imitation of those monograms of Christ we find in later times a monogram of the Blessed Virgin Mary, formed by adding and interlacing the M and R; in which  may be read: Ave Maria. Hail Mary.

6 ΜΡ ΘΥ are the first and last letters of the two Greek words ΜΗΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΥ, Mother of God, very often found under a picture or statue of the blessed Virgin.

#### ABBREVIATIONS.

A.D. Anno Domini: In the year of our Lord.

A.M.D.G.: Ad maiorem Dei gloriam: To the greater glory of God. The device of St. Ignatius of Loyola and later on of the Order of Jesuits.

A.M.G.P.D.T.: Ave Maria gratia plena, Dominus Tecum: Hail Mary full of grace, the Lord is with Thee.



- An. : For, anni or anno : of or in the year.
- A.O.R. Anno orbis redempti : In the year  
of the world's redemption.
- A.X. : Anno Christi : In the year of Christ.
- B. : Beatus (Beata) the Blessed.
- B.M.V. : Beatae Mariae Virgini (s) : To or  
of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
- O.P.N. : Ora (te) pro nobis. Pray (ye)  
for us.
- D.F. : Deo favente : Under the favour of God.
- D.G. : Deo gratias : Thanks be to God.
- D.O.M. : Deo optimo, maximo : To the best  
and highest God.
- Epi : Episcopi : of the Bishop.
- G.M. : Gloriosae memoriae : of glorious  
memory.
- H.L.S.E. : Hoc loco sepultus est : Here  
lies buried.
- I.M. : In memoriam : To the memory.
- I.M.I. : Jesus, Mary, Joseph, on a statue or  
picture of the Holy Family.
- I.ND. : In nomine Dei (Domini) In the  
name of God (of the Lord).
- I.N.R.I. : Jesus Nazaraeus Rex Judeorum.  
Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.  
The title or inscription over a crucifix.
- I.N.S.I. : In nomine sanctissimae Trinitatis.  
In the name of the most Blessed Trinity.
- I.P.I. : In partibus infidelium : in the country  
of the infidels.

- L.D. : Laus Deo : Praise be to God.  
O.P.M. : Ora (te) pro me : Pray (ye) for me. (Frequently found under the work of artists, writers, or the dedication of founders or benefactors).  
P.M. : Piae Memoriae : To the pious memory. Sometimes written,  
B.M. : Bonae or Beatae memoriae, to the happy, the blessed memory.  
P.T. : Post (festum) Trinitatis : After Trinity Sunday.  
R.I.P. : Requesca(n)t in pace : May he, she (they) rest in peace.  
S or St. : Sanctus : Saint.  
S.D.G. : Soli Deo Gloria : to God alone the honour.  
S.J. : Societatis Jesu : Of the society of Jesus. (Jesuit).  
D.V. : Deo volente : God willing.  
H.H. : His Holiness (the Pope).  
H.E. : His Eminence (a Cardinal).  
L.S. : Loco sigilli : In the place of the seal.

One more subject demands our special notice. Its nature differs so entirely from all that has gone before, that to many minds it must appear an inexplicable intrusion. We shall see that it is only apparently so.

Accompanying the thoughtful and deeply felt emblems and symbols we have treated of,

we find the playful, free and easy, satirical treatment of various subjects in monstrous figures, humoristic shapes, laughable exaggerations and such like extravagances. Side by side with serious intelligence and feeling, we find the vivid imagination of the mediæval artists at work in their

### CARICATURES.

They constitute a very remarkable feature of the church-architecture of those days. They were and still are to be found in the churches ; in the monstrous heads of the waterspouts, in the choir-stalls, at the pillars, in portals and sanctuary, on high, below, everywhere, in nooks and corners, half-hidden, but just sufficiently exposed to be seen, without becoming too prominent. They were at first introduced with innocent laughing intent, but later on they degenerated into exhibitions of shockingly bad taste, like those for instance, that aroused the burning indignation of Saint Bernard. The nearer we approach the protestantizing sixteenth century, the more scathingly offensive those caricatures become, especially on the outside of the sacred buildings.



FIG. 73.—A dragon : gargoyle.

1. Originally those grotesque images were

introduced, or at least admitted by the clergy, as silent sermons concerning the folly of sin, or as serious encouragement of the opposite virtues. Hence we find sin ridiculed and condemned in countless ways, in the distorted heads of various social types, and in numberless real or imaginary animal faces with their monstrous proportions, very frequently excellently expressive of the character implied. They exhibited the vices that were to be eschewed, or the temptations that were to be repelled. With striking symbolism, they are generally half-hidden, as for instance in the carving of the choir-seats, with the additional meaning of having been put to flight by the monks. As an illustration we may cite the vexatious, only partly visible spirit of distraction, (called Titynillus by some mediæval writers) an imp, that disturbed the religious during the recital of the canonical hours, whose effigy may be seen on countless choir-seats.

2. Further we find dragons, monkeys, devils, ferocious animals of the wilderness, and unknown monsters of all sorts. They protruded as waterspouts, they were crushed under the weight of the pillars, they were bent under the burden of heavy joists or stooped under the heavy masses of stone.

Symbolism indicated in this way, (especially by the waterspouts) the heretics thrown out

by the Church, the evil that hides itself in the presence of virtue, and the obstinacy and malice, that in some way is turned to the profit of God's Church.

3. The serpent and the amphibious siren, (woman and bird or fish) the well-known emblems of seduction, and the monkey, that seems to be credited with all sorts of mischief, are the greatest favourites, but several others run them very close. We only mention the basilisk, the serpent-dragon, with its killing aspect, the symbol of slander, slaying at a distance; the asp or poisonous viper, the emblem of the hardness of heart; the griffin, or fabulous lion-eagle with its fell character of cruel rapacity; the swine or wild boar, emblem of lust; the sly fox and the gluttonous wolf, and many others already mentioned under symbolic animals.

And now we have reached the end of our excursion through the Catholic symbolic church-edifice. We have seen it grow up into a living building, and decked out with eloquent ornaments. Did all this sound strange in your ears? Strange, perhaps, as an old truth, pitifully and too generally forgotten. But listen to St. Paul: 'Know ye



FIG. 74.—  
Owl on  
balustrade.



FIG. 75.—Monkey  
playing the  
violin.

not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost?' That temple is holy; it is built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, the corner-stone being Jesus Christ Himself, 'in Whom you are co-edificated into a temple of God in the Holy Ghost.' Symbolism desired nothing else; it attempted to give a material expression in wood and stone to that spiritual temple of the doctrine of Christ and of our souls. That was its desire of old, and it still desires it at present, in almost the same way, in our own churches of our own time and place.

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